



## DATALIANT KEEPS CITY'S IT UPGRADE ON RIGHT TRACK

Sometimes even experienced IT folks need a helping hand. That's what Greg Leach concluded after strategizing with his team about how to handle an upgrade to the City of Gainesville's network infrastructure. As IT manager for this northeast Georgia city, Leach was sure the project would go more smoothly and efficiently if he could find an experienced consulting firm to guide the process.

### Consultants to Play Key Role in Major Migration

"We needed to migrate from Windows Server NT4 to Windows Server 2003, implement Active Directory, and improve security," Leach says. "But we also needed to do the hands-on work ourselves. To avoid a trial and error approach, we decided to bring in experts who could develop a master plan for us and guide the process."

Leach wrote a request for proposal (RFP) and invited companies to compete for the project. After meeting with several firms and carefully assessing their qualifications, he awarded the contract to Dataliant, Inc. in spring of 2004.

### Dataliant Creates Master Plan

Dataliant assigned senior engineer Jeff Miotke to direct the project. "Greg wanted the migration to be transparent to end users," Miotke says. "As part of the master plan, we recommended setting up a test lab so they could walk through the migration in a virtual environment before trying it in the real world." Following this strategy allowed the City of Gainesville's IT staff to perform an in-place migration without disrupting end-user services. "Being able to run two domains side-by-side really simplified the upgrade process," says Roy Snyder, the city's network administrator. "We were able to complete our major objectives within 30 days and then focus on migrating the desktops of individual users." Leach agrees. "The plan allowed us to avoid crisis and finish the migration with no downtime."

### Security Gets Easier

Implementing the Active Directory service has yielded immediate benefits, Snyder adds. He is now able to set policies for entire groups of users and then apply them across the network. For example, the service's centralized management functions allow him to lock user desktops after a specified period of inactivity. "Active Directory makes it easier to maintain security," he says. "If users walk away from their computers, the desktop locks after a certain amount of time. To regain access, they have to log back in." These capabilities are improving security across the network and simplifying network administration as well.

### A Learning Experience That Lasts

Leach says his staff has benefited significantly from working with Miotke and Olszewski. "One goal was ensuring knowledge transfer to our staff," says Leach. "That worked out. We're now supporting the new network without outside help." Miotke credits the department for being willing to go through the intermediate step of learning the migration process in the test lab. "It gave us the opportunity to do some homework before trying it for real. The testing was a confidence booster for everyone." Leach would recommend a similar approach to other organizations facing technology challenges. And he says the City of Gainesville is already considering Dataliant for another spin-off project related to the network upgrade. "They made the project very simple," he says. "We stayed on plan and within budget. I'd call that a success."