

Misionero Prioritizes Business Continuity + Disaster Recovery with Technology Investments

By Jenna Hardie, ZAG Technical Services

The threat landscape across agribusinesses spans climate, processing, and supply challenges, but emerging now is a whole new category: cyberattacks. The companies that embrace forward-thinking technology – and work to safeguard those investments – often come out ahead. That’s where Misionero Foods takes a future-looking approach.

Misionero, founded in 1973 in California’s Salinas Valley, prides itself on implementing new technologies that focus on long-term ethical growing, processing, and harvesting practices. Specializing in organic specialty salads, organic and conventional washed and trimmed lettuces, organic and conventional bagged vegetables, and meal replacement salad kits, Misionero operates in four locations across California and Yuma, Arizona.

Part of the company’s long-term goals is preparedness and protecting its brands, including Earth Greens, Garden Life, and Green Wave Farms. Within the last two years, Misionero began working with ZAG Technical Services to transition the entire company away from using an on-premise data center to run its applications, such as its ERP system, to a more cloud-based approach. The challenges of supporting and maintaining the on-premise system began to take a toll on the company’s ability to plan strategically for technology investments down the road.

Investing in technology that supports business needs

With the growing challenges around cybersecurity, Misionero needed to be better able to securely support remote work, which would later come into play as the COVID-19 pandemic required this shift. But what was critically important for the Misionero team was the development of a business continuity plan and technology that would support disaster recovery in case of a cyberattack or outage within the company’s operations.

ZAG Technical Services worked with Misionero to identify the goals of the organization and the technology that would need to be implemented to meet them.

“As the world shifted to more remote work, it was difficult for our team to access the resources they needed to do their jobs securely,” said Justin Balas, CFO at Misionero. “The more challenges we identified, the more sense it made for us to look at a cloud-based environment.”

ZAG recommended the migration of Misionero’s systems to Microsoft Azure and Azure Virtual Desktop (AVD), which would allow the company the flexibility to not only add more capacity to its storage capabilities, but also provide the infrastructure the organization needed to support more remote work. Azure does not require on-site hardware, which significantly reduced the capital expenditure needed to invest in a new on-premise data center and storage solution.

Misionero relies on managed services provider (MSP) ZAG Technical Services to provide ongoing support for its technology investments, including ongoing application updates and maintenance, user support, device and backup monitoring, and workstation patching.

“Employees are getting a better user experience since the migration; the environment performs better and is more stable, and administration is easier,” said Balas. “As we expand within the Azure ecosystem, we’re realizing the long-term benefits of the solution as we can better scale as we grow.”

Incremental changes for more cyber protection

It was important for Misionero to create additional layers of protection for its systems given the rise in cyberattacks on companies in the agriculture supply chain.

Attacks on the nation’s food supply and its critical infrastructure have highlighted how a single cyberattack can create a ripple effect. The Colonial Pipeline hack shut down supplies to gas in the Southeastern United States in early 2021, and weeks later global meat processing company JBS paid an \$11 million ransom to the REvil ransomware group.

Vulnerabilities found in the technology of many organizations can be addressed using some of the tactics that Misionero used, including:

- Implementing Multi-Factor Authentication (MFA), which adds an additional layer of protection for its email applications by requiring users to authenticate their identity on multiple devices to access critical systems such as email.
- Investing in more stable environment like Microsoft Azure ensures the company has a plan for disaster recovery. Misionero now has peace-of-mind knowing that the company’s data is backed up in the event of an outage or security event.
- More focus on business continuity measures. With technology investments that help protect the environment, it’s easier to look at the bigger picture and establish a business continuity plan that takes into account every aspect keeping the business operational in case of a breach or outage.

“Investing in the kind of technology that protects Misionero from having our data lost due to an outage or breach allows our IT teams to focus its efforts on strategies for improving internal operational improvements,” Balas said. “ZAG supporting our technology means we can establish more long-term goals for the company.”