

Case Study



Computing Applications

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– Tom Lykins
IT Manager
HorseDesigns.com



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Growing California Company Bucks Power Outages with Help from Falcon Electric

A cornerstone for most entrepreneurial companies is the reliable operation of their computing systems. Since small businesses typically don't have 24 by 7 IT departments to fix problems, owners have to make very smart choices in protecting critical business systems. This protection – rain or shine – is paramount to increased revenues and, ultimately, happy customers.

HorseDesigns.com is a small business based in beautiful Penn Valley, California. Co-owner, Sharon O'Brien, is a gifted artist who left the corporate world to start a company devoted to capturing the beauty of horses in various settings and applying the images onto T-Shirts, mugs, calendars and other gift items. Beginning as a wobbly yearling start-up and then growing into an agile Internet-based custom gift vendor, HorseDesigns.com has had its share of technical challenges along the way.

One of the challenges the company faced had to do with the most important tool in HorseDesigns' arsenal: the computers and printers that give the graphic artist the ability to create images for printing on a number of mediums. As is typical with most small businesses that depend on leading-edge graphics, they invested in the latest Macintosh computers and graphic printers.

IT Manager, Tom Lykins reflects, "We're located in a rural country setting and our electricity from the power grid isn't stable. So, we purchased an uninterruptible power supply (UPS) to protect our computers from power disruptions. As our business grew, we required additional top-of-the-line Macs and printers. During our latest upgrade, we determined that we needed an additional UPS. We were going to order the same brand, but we started noticing that the UPS was beeping frequently – meaning that we had to replace its batteries – very prematurely. I did some investigating and found that not all UPSes are alike and that there are different types of UPSes. I learned that while our Line-interactive UPS protects our Macs from power outages, the unit can only provide very basic battery backup and limited voltage regulation.

"Through my research, I discovered that the On-line UPS does not suffer from premature battery wear. This is due to its unique design. The On-line UPS regenerates new, regulated output power, even when utility power is present. Utility power fluctuations do not affect it or cause it to go to battery unless the power

is completely lost. The On-line UPS also provides a much higher level of protection against more types of power problems. It is a true 'uninterruptible' power system, unlike the Line-interactive design."

Due to their need for continuous power, HorseDesigns purchased a Falcon SG Series™ 2kVA On-line UPS and installed it on their new equipment, relegating the Line-interactive UPS to be used on other less critical equipment. Little did they know that they would soon experience first hand the differences between an On-line UPS and a Line-interactive UPS.

Part of their computing system consisted of a very large laser printer which they had connected to the same electrical circuit feeding both of the UPSes. They started noticing that every time the printer's fuser heating element turned on, the Line-interactive UPS would beep and go to battery, while the Falcon On-line UPS was unaffected. During the day, the printer fuser would turn on and off until the Line-interactive UPS batteries were completely discharged. At this point the computer and equipment connected to the Line-interactive UPS was disrupted and turned off without notice. The computer equipment connected to the Falcon UPS continued to operate without a problem."

To solve the problem they had to connect the laser printer to another electrical circuit, away from the Line-interactive UPS. "We had spent a considerable amount of money for the Line-interactive UPS so we thought we could at least use it to protect less important equipment; however, a storm, the first big one of 2008, caused a power outage that was preceded by a huge surge which totally destroyed the UPS - it was literally smoking. I sensed this was going to be more than a momentary outage, so after about five minutes I went outside and turned on our motor generator. My confidence increased when I remembered that one of the key features of the Falcon UPS is its compatibility with generators. The combination of the generator and UPS kept our business, our website and all other vital links on and available during the entire three days of the big storm."

Since the storm, HorseDesigns.com has plugged all their computers and network gear into the Falcon SG Series UPS. "I called Falcon's technical support and found they were very knowledgeable. After using the other UPS side-by-side with the Falcon UPS, it is very clear that the extra money spent on the Falcon On-line UPS was worth the investment."