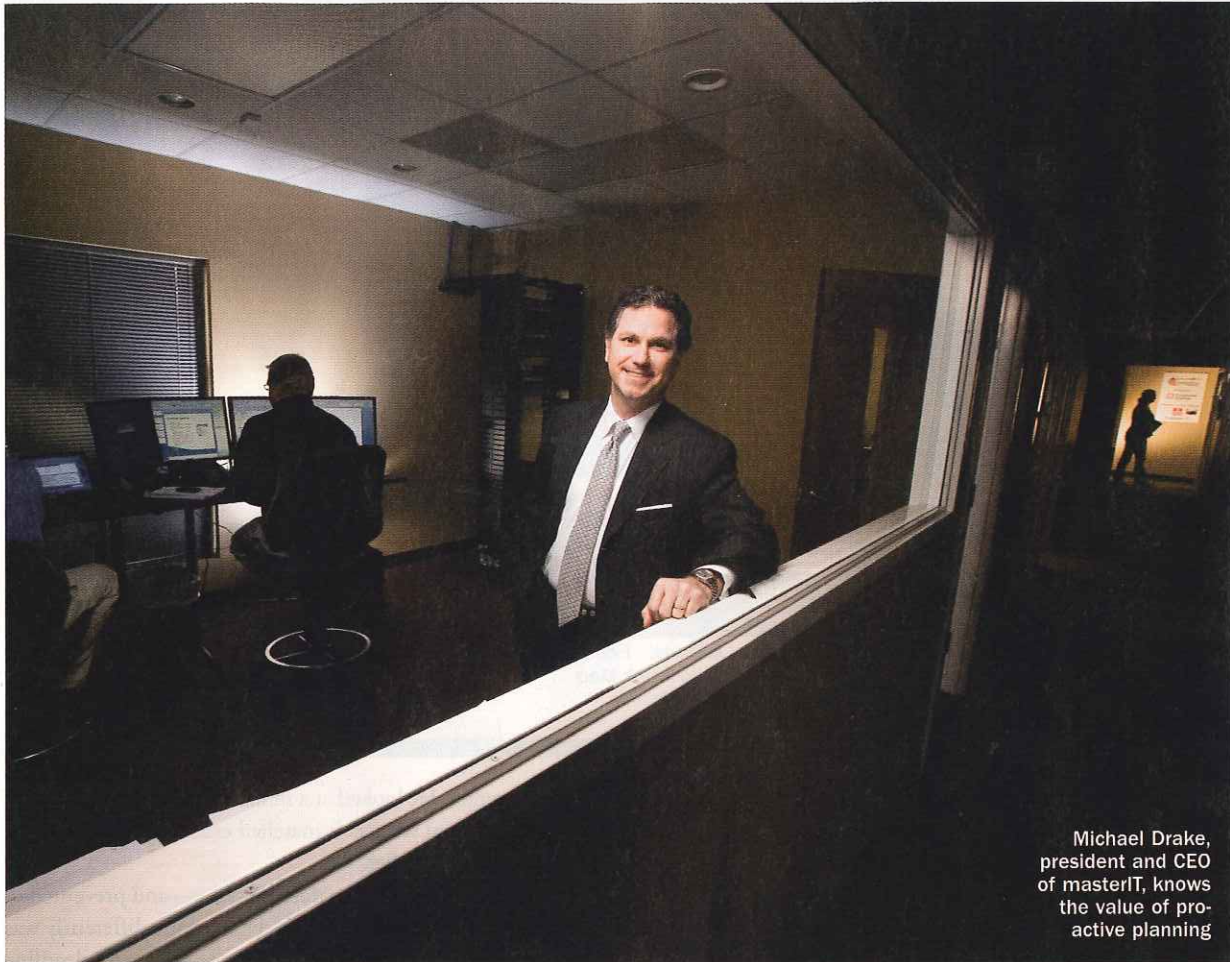


Drill Down

100K

Number of monthly downloads of the Pentaho software suite. (p18)

BETTER CHANNEL BUSINESS EVERY DAY



Michael Drake, president and CEO of masterIT, knows the value of proactive planning

MSP MASTERS THE STORM

BY SCOTT CAMPBELL

Michael Drake thought he had the bases covered.

When the president and CEO of masterIT LLC founded the Bartlett, Tenn.-based MSP in 2005, he wanted to make sure that he—and his customers—would be secure in the unlikely event of a disaster. After major disasters such as 9/11 and Hurricane Katrina, it was of utmost importance to Drake to make sure his company could weather any storm.

As an MSP, it was also masterIT's job to ensure his cus-

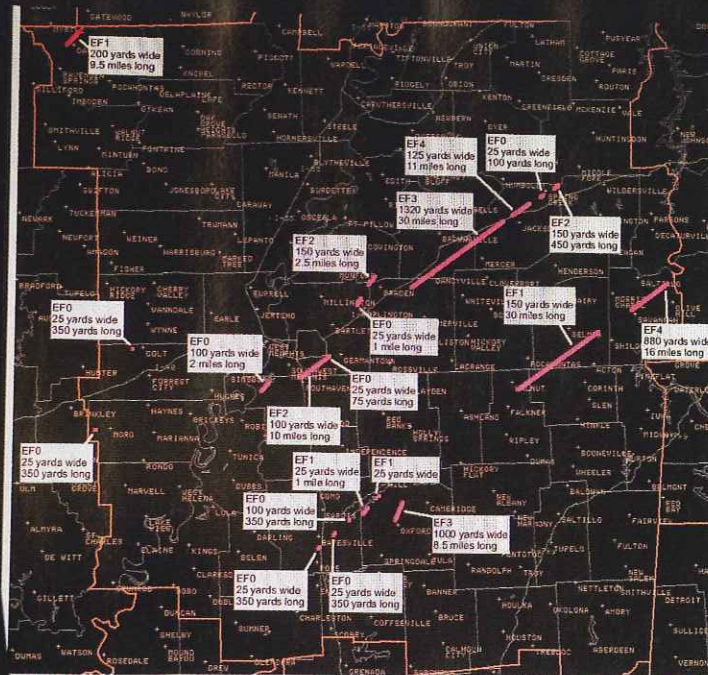
tomers could do the same. He selected a nearby Time Warner (NYSE:TWX) Telecom facility as a co-location partner and signed up with EVault to back up customer data in Atlanta, outside of what Drake calls the “shake zone” around Memphis—the New Madrid Fault Line, the second largest seismic zone in North America.

On Tuesday, Feb. 5, the big test came. A major storm and several tornadoes swept through several southern states, killing at least 50 people, destroying university buildings, a mall and hundreds of homes and businesses. Drake himself spent 20 terrifying minutes with his family and animals in an under-the-

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVE JONES

Data On The Move 12 | Help With HIPAA 14 | Good Hospitality 20

Tornado-related damages were minimal for masterIT's clients.



"Super Tuesday" Tornado Outbreak - February 5, 2008
Preliminary Tornado Track Map
National Weather Service - Memphis, TN

stairway closet waiting for the storm to pass. One twister's path came less than a mile from his house.

When the skies finally cleared, Drake and hundreds of thousands of others emerged to inspect the damage. "We were very fortunate. A lot of people weren't," he said.

And then he had to check on his customers.

The TimeWarner co-location data facility—less than a mile from the Hickory Ridge Mall which sustained heavy damage—lost power, but a backup generator kicked on and the IT systems didn't miss a beat. MasterIT's own office also was spared and its systems began spitting out incident reports. More than a dozen customers had lost their Internet, but thanks to the company's protective measures, the customers' data was secure and their businesses could resume as normal.

"A situation like this really brings to mind disaster preparedness. We had very few issues to deal with this morning," Drake said. "You're first concerned with life and limb. Business continuity is a second thought. We were blessed to come through it OK, but I'll tell you, it's another affirmation for what our industry does, even in an event such as this."

Drake said his MSP tools by N-able Technologies Inc., Ottawa, told him that about 16 clients had lost their Internet connectivity due to the storm, about half of which were still without access a day later.

The next day, he walked into the masterIT's onsite network

operating center. He looked at a monitor that showed a map of the clients without service. It matched exactly the swath cut by the tornado a day earlier.

A day after surveying the damage done—and prevented—Drake said the only thing he would have done differently was to let his employees leave earlier than the 4:15 p.m. deadline he gave them on Tuesday.

"The local news had been talking about this [storm] for 48 hours. When I went for lunch to vote in the [Super Tuesday] primary, I saw that it was 78 degrees in Memphis in February. I knew we were in trouble," he said. "The facility we're in contains a warehouse, which is not the safest place to be in the event of a tornado. If we had to do it over, we could still provide the same level of monitoring and service because you can do it remotely. For the safety of our employees, I would have sent them home earlier."

But everyone was safe. The damage could have been worse. The tornadoes hadn't touched any of his employees' homes or customers' offices. There's always the chance for another disaster, but Drake feels that his proactive approach to disaster recovery helped him this time around.

"We had the regulatory [compliance] environment [for customers] covered and the risk mitigated by having the data stored [off site]," Drake said. "The servers that house our N-able platform at TimeWarner never skipped a beat. That's a big story."

All the bases were covered. MasterIT 1, Tornadoes 0. ■