



**ROWAN COUNTY**  
A County Committed to Excellence



**Core Business**  
Public Safety/  
County Management

**Platform**  
OS/400

**Headquarters**  
Rowan County, NC

**Managed Availability  
Solution**

**Transaction Volume**  
500,000 per day



**The Company**

Rowan County, population 130,000, is located in the Piedmont area of North Carolina between the Appalachian Mountains and the coast. The county's computing infrastructure is primarily an IBM iSeries (OS/400), with a LAN/WAN environment of Windows PCs. Rowan County's IT department handles technology needs for all county departments including social and health services, sheriff's office, board of elections and property tax administration.

**Public Welfare Challenges Faced**

One of the most important challenges faced by the county is how to provide uninterrupted public safety applications. "How can we make the county more secure at every level – including the computer department?" asked David Boling, Computer Resources Director for Rowan County. "That's one of the main reasons we deployed Vision. We need to have a second iSeries with a complete mirrored set of applications, data and operating system, so we can ensure survival in a disaster."

In addition, Boling pointed out that the county must ensure 24/7 availability of public safety software on a daily basis to support such vital functions as 911 dispatching. When a 911 call comes in, the county's public safety software interacts with other systems to provide essential information such as the location of the call and optimal routes to the area for fire, police or ambulance services. Data is also shared with applications such as crime and detention software which provide information about suspects and detainees.

For Rowan County, it is not just about avoiding disasters, but also limiting planned downtime for backups and upgrades. "We used to do a save-while-active backup, which is not the most comfortable way to backup your data," Boling recalled. "Save-while-active means the user is actually adding records to the database while we are performing a backup. The problem was that when we reloaded our system, the files might not be in sync. Depending on how much data was being added, this could cause a lot of problems."

Boling noted that the alternative, planned downtime, was not an option. "We realized we couldn't handle the downtime," he said. "It would have taken 2-3 hours every night to get a solid backup, where we knew that everything was perfect. Vision gives us the ability to backup at anytime and know our files are in sync."

**The Solution**

To protect Rowan County's applications on the i-Series, they implemented Vision Suite® to replicate data to a second i-Series the county already owned. Applications on the i-Series include public safety, finance, payroll, computer-aided dispatch, detention center and crime applications.

"We did not want to have to change our processes to adapt to high availability," Boling said. "In contrast to the alternatives, Vision adapts to the way our county functions. I heard horror stories about other high availability products, and I was very skeptical that a product could offer the high availability we needed without adding a significant staff time requirement. We needed a flexible product that we did not have to baby-sit all the time, and we have found that with Vision."



## Benefits

Vision provides high availability and disaster recovery for all of the county's iSeries applications, which was critical for Rowan County. But Boling also stated that Vision reduces backup time and virtually eliminates downtime needed to backup the system.

"We don't have to experience a disaster to reap the benefits of Vision Suite®," Boling confirmed. "We reap the benefits of Vision every day, by backing up our systems without interrupting user access."

"A problem we face all the time in IT is that as our databases grow larger, in order to ensure we have all files in sync and get a backup to a single point in time, we need users to be off the system while the files are being backed up," he continued.

"When you take users off the system, you are taking resources away from them. But since Vision is replicating data to another iSeries, we always have a copy of the data at any point in time, and the users can still access that data in the production system – while we are performing a backup. The users can do their jobs without experiencing any downtime or even having any awareness of the backup."

"Traditionally in IT, the problem has always been getting users off the system so we can do our maintenance, and Vision gives us a better option," he added. "While most places are stuck with one nightly backup, Vision allows us to back up data multiple times during regular business hours – anytime we want to, whenever we want to. We can perform these functions in our own timeframe, instead of having to work around everyone else. The ability to schedule backups when our staff is already at work also means faster ROI for Vision." In addition to backups, Vision also helps the county eliminate downtime associated with system maintenance or upgrades, which can take up to 6-8 hours.



## Public Service Advantages

"Deploying Vision was the right thing to do," Boling said. "How important are Rowan County's public safety services? Public safety can involve life or death situations. Of course, our emergency services can carry out dispatch functions without the computer if they must. But without all the resources, they could miss something critical.

The more information they have at their fingertips, the better they can do their jobs -- and most of the jobs are critical. If we miss something, people will be affected. Do we really want them working without all these resources? It comes down to giving the public a level of security, safety and dependability, so when they need a county service, it is available to them. Vision helps us achieve that objective."

## Vision: The Right Business Partner

"With high availability, having the right business partners is critical to success," Boling explained. "We need a solid high availability product, but we also need dependable business partners to install and support the product. Vision Solutions and their premier integrator, Strategic Systems, are the right business partners. They are excellent to work with."

"Their knowledge of the iSeries, and the software we were using on the iSeries, made me confident that they knew what they were talking about. We want our high availability business partners to truly understand their product -- and high availability needs to be their focus in life. But knowledge of the iSeries is also very important, outside of how their product relates. When Vision and Strategic Systems came to Rowan County to demonstrate their expertise, it wasn't just a sales pitch. They understand the environment, and the situation I am in; they can discuss and address my issues on a level that makes sense to me; and they are available anytime we need support. I was looking for high availability software and business partners as solid as the iSeries – Finally, I have that with Vision."

## Vision Solutions Headquarters

17911 Von Karman, 5th Floor  
Irvine, California 92614 USA  
Tel: 949.253.6500 • 800.683.4667  
Fax: 949.253.6501  
Website: [www.visionsolutions.com](http://www.visionsolutions.com)