FERRUPS provides exceptional protection for more than 20 years

Product:
Eaton® FERRUPS

Location:
Brea, Calif.

Market Served:
IT Industry

"If you're really trying to get something to run trouble free and be reliable, this is the technology to use. This has worked so well the past 20-plus years that we not only use it ourselves, but our customers use it, as well."

- Douglas Schmidt, President, CEO.

Background

Since 1988, Hardsoft Corporation has specialized in designing and delivering complete computer network solutions primarily to small- and medium-sized businesses. Committed to its longstanding record for achieving network reliability, the reseller's goal is to help clients use technology to meet everyday business challenges.

Partnering with such manufacturers as Microsoft, Attachmate (Novell), Symantec, HP, Lenovo and VMware, Hardsoft has developed network platforms for a wide variety of industries, including automotive, manufacturing, medical and law firms.

Challenge

The fact that Hardsoft carefully tests and screens much of the equipment it sells prior to delivery is testament to the company's dedication to customer satisfaction. Routinely dealing with extremely high-end servers and switches, the firm relies on uninterruptible power systems (UPSs) to not only keep its own critical operations up and running but to safeguard client purchases before the hardware goes out the door.

"I might have a very expensive HP DL580 G5 virtualization server running VMware penciling out for about $70K," explains Douglas Schmidt, Hardsoft's president. "What I don't want to do is have it damaged before it can be delivered."

To help ensure the ongoing health of its customers' equipment purchases, Hardsoft frequently tacks power protection on to the sale. Beyond high reliability, Schmidt seeks solutions that can provide longevity for attached devices while requiring low maintenance. Thankfully, for more than two decades, the firm has relied almost exclusively on a single UPS model for protecting critical server loads: the Eaton FERRUPS.

Solution

With six units operating on-site – as well as dozens more sold to customers over the years – Hardsoft has been dealing with the FERRUPS since the mid-1980s.

"If you're trying to get something to run trouble-free and be reliable, this is the technology to use," Schmidt attests. "This has worked so well the past 20-plus years that we not only use it ourselves, but our customers use it, as well."

Schmidt says that he has witnessed a strong correlation between exceptionally long server life and FERRUPS backup protection. "It's a very specialized item that usually goes with the expensive servers and switches," he notes. "It's a very good unit for protecting that kind of load. When reliability is a very critical part of your business, the FERRUPS is great because its design really cleans up power."

Indeed, the FERRUPS offers unmatched reliability in configurable power protection, boasting patented ferroresonant technology that delivers "bulletproof" protection against spikes, surges, noise and lightning. The unit eliminates harmful harmonic currents from entering a building's wiring and disrupting operations, while providing regulated output voltage without drawing power from the batteries.

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The longevity of connected equipment has been especially advantageous for Hardsoft's customers in the current economy. "In this recession, it's difficult for many of my customers to replace their servers as often as they should," Schmidt acknowledges. "Many are long overdue, but they are still running well and all are attached to FERRUPS units.

"They are ultra-reliable," he adds. "They provide very clean stable output so connected equipment lasts longer and has fewer issues."

And Schmidt certainly knows firsthand. A pair of 1.8 kVA FERRUPS units – one of which is 15 years old – is attached to equipment in Hardsoft's lab, while two 850 kVA models and a 1.4 kVA unit safeguard a range of severs and switches within the company's computer room. In addition, a 1.6 kVA unit is currently tasked with protecting a $70,000 switch that Schmidt is preparing for delivery.

"I use it all the time for my lab benches to test the very expensive stuff that you can't replace," reveals the self-proclaimed FERRUPS specialist.

While Schmidt often supplies Eaton 5115 UPSs to customers seeking to back up workstations and other less critical devices, he insists that only FERRUPS accompany server sales, with the UPSs having been deployed into a wide range of applications, including car dealerships, hospitals, law firms, computer rooms and manufacturing plants. "Places where you really have to be careful about power disturbances," he explains. "If we're putting a server together, a FERRUPS is what we're going to spec out."

Another benefit that makes the FERRUPS so appealing is its extensive configurability options, which include an extensive range of options for voltages, frequencies, runtimes, power cords and receptacles.

Getting better with age

While Schmidt says that the FERRUPS design has been successful for more than 30 years, improved technology and components have further enhanced the UPS's capabilities.

Newer design elements, such as locating the battery load cut-off switch in the back of the unit, makes it easier to safely replace batteries, facilitating easier battery replacement through tab connectors. Additionally, moving to a 24V system on smaller models has reduced the amount of current the internal batteries has to carry. Improved handling of Power Factor Corrected (PFC) type loads with the DVR/AVR options has helped, as well.

"The design has improved, but overall its reliability stayed the same," says Schmidt. "I think the design life on these things is supposed to be about 22 years."

In fact, Schmidt has a customer running a now-obsolete FERRUPS ME Series that has been in service for more than 20 years. "We're running it just to see how long it will run," he confesses. "I just keep replacing batteries every three to four years."

And Schmidt is not only a fan of using and selling the FERRUPS, but a specialist in repairing them, too – although he is quick to point out that the units require little maintenance.

"Every three years we replace the batteries in them, but that's about all we do," he says. "You used to have to replace the fans every three years as well, but with design improvements, we haven't replaced one in a long time."

Results

"We've been using this particular technology for over 20 years and we've been very, very successful with it," Schmidt says.

With the FERRUPS, Hardsoft is able to:

- Safely test high-value customer equipment prior to delivery.
- Ensure the longevity of its own servers, switches and other sensitive electronic equipment
- Provide an exceptionally reliable UPS solution to its customers.

"Yes, there is newer technology out there," Schmidt acknowledges. "But I don't think there is anything out there with a 20-year or longer track record."

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