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## A Thanksgiving Miracle

*Trivalent And Former  
CyberNET Engineers  
Save \$200M Company*

By Daniel Schoonmaker

GRAND RAPIDS — As the sad story of the CyberNET Group and its ill-fated CEO was coming to an end, a small group of engineers was working hard to ensure that no other companies were swallowed up in its wake.

With the fate of a \$200 million intermodal transportation company on the line, Grandville-based technology firm Trivalent Group teamed up with a band of former CyberNET engineers to save RoadLink USA's national network over the Thanksgiving weekend.

"Frankly, we could have been out of business," said David Anthony, RoadLink executive vice president. "We literally had 2,000 families from RoadLink, including our drivers and our people, on the line. If it didn't put us out of business, it would have had at the least a severe and catastrophic financial impact."

RoadLink USA is a Pennsylvania-based holding company comprised of a network of operating companies focused on intermodal trucking, regional truckload and related logistics services with annual revenue in excess of \$200 million. With 50 service locations coast-to-coast and 1,500 trucks, it is the largest company of its kind in North America.

RoadLink was CyberNET's second-largest account and the now-defunct company had been positioned as a key service provider and a central component of RoadLink's corporate structure.

In 2000, when RoadLink achieved its current size through a consolidation of seven different companies, the new company needed a way to integrate the IT infrastructures of the merged firms to function as one entity.

CyberNET was able to provide a managed care service solution by housing all



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*CyberNET and Trivalent engineers, from left, Rich Reiffer, Scott Andrews, Ted Ooyevaar, Patrick Keeler, Jerry Goedert, Michael Price, Steve Westra, Wil Bedford and Berant Lemmenes (Cory Dykstra is not shown), helped save a Pennsylvania logistics firm over the long Thanksgiving weekend.*

of the merged entities' data in its global operations center at 25 S. Division Ave., integrating multiple databases while allowing the data to be accessed through the same IT infrastructure to which the member companies and employees were accustomed.

On the morning of Friday, Nov. 19, Anthony was on site in Boston as part of a massive rollout through RoadLink's largest division of a new proprietary software system. A nationwide rollout requiring three weeks on site at each location and over 250 tasks, the upgrade created a computerized live dispatch system allowing real-time customer updates.

If the system went down, 1,500 trucks would be running blind.

In the midst of this, Anthony received a call from his contact at CyberNET, account manager Ian Grobel.

"I'm in the middle of my largest software transition to date — I'm behind on voice mails, e-mails — and I get this message on my cell phone," Anthony recalled. "He says, 'I don't want to alarm you. I

don't know what's going on, no one knows what's going on, but we're in trouble. Please call me.'"

Anthony said this was the first glitch in his four-year relationship with the company, and he did not assume the worst initially, but as he spoke with other CyberNET contacts, including Ted Ooyevaar, manager of CyberNET's engineering group, the extent of the situation came to light. When the story broke within the media and the lawsuit by Charter One Vendor Finance became public knowledge, Anthony realized his network and data were no longer safe with CyberNET.

On Monday, Nov. 22, he began working with Ooyevaar and other CyberNET holdouts to plan the pullout. RoadLink owned its servers at CyberNET, but leased 800Gb of space on a XIOTec Storage Area Network (SAN). The servers could be uprooted, but a new SAN was needed. Sprint agreed to expedite a new network, and Ooyevaar pledged the support of what remained of his team.

As Anthony flew into Grand Rapids the

following morning, his largest concern had become finding a new data center. RoadLink was without a back-up data center, with a new facility being built in Bethlehem, Md., not slated for completion until the first quarter of 2005.

That changed quickly, however, when CyberNET's assets were seized as part of Management Services Realty's receivership. While RoadLink's legal representation worked to gain access to its hardware and data, Trivalent's upper management was about to find itself involved with the scandal they had seen unfold on TV.

"In West Michigan, there are a handful of companies like ours," said John Hey, Trivalent vice president of professional services. "It's a friendly competition, but to have something like this happen to CyberNET, it's not hard to identify with the individuals that were affected by this. It was pretty easy to holster any egos."

"The emphasis had been on the sensationalism, the fraud and all the monkey business and their CEO's exit," said Trivalent CEO Larry Andrus, referring to the suicide of CyberNET's Barton Watson. "The real issue is that there are real customers and real employees involved."

Just before noon on Tuesday, Andrus received a call from a XIOtec representative. Trivalent was XIOtec's largest Michigan business partner and the SAN vendor was helping Anthony look for a compatible data center somewhere within the region. Andrus understood the situation and expressed a desire to help.

Two minutes later, Anthony was on the phone with Andrus. When RoadLink received access to CyberNET later that afternoon, Trivalent informed its own engineers that plans for Thanksgiving weekend had changed.

Beginning at the close of business on Wednesday afternoon, Trivalent engineers Michael Price, Steve Westra and Cory Dykstra, along with branch manager Scott Andrews and CTO Rich Reiffer, worked with a half-dozen now-unemployed CyberNET engineers — one a new college graduate who had yet to receive his first paycheck — to remove 47 servers and assorted devices from CyberNET offices.

The RoadLink network had already survived a day's worth of catastrophe by that point, with the company paying CyberNET's electric bill to keep the network up until the holiday weekend began.

But even with almost 12 inches of snow and a near cancellation of moving vans, the servers were still out of the building by Thanksgiving morning.

Much of the group, including CyberNET engineers Ooyevaar, Berant Lemmenes, Wil Bedford and Jerry Goedert, worked through the weekend. The servers were successfully installed and configured at Trivalent, as was the

## RoadLink USA's Thanksgiving Ordeal

**Thurs. Nov. 18, morning** — CyberNET Group's South Division headquarters raided by federal agents.

**Fri. Nov. 19** — RoadLink USA Executive Vice President David Anthony receives cell phone call from CyberNET account manager Ian Grobel: "I don't want to alarm you, but ..." Charter One Vendor Finance files lawsuit again CyberNET.

**Mon. Nov. 22** — With few options, Anthony decides to relocate the network from CyberNET.

**Tues. Nov. 23, morning** — Anthony arrives in Grand Rapids from Boston.

**Tues. Nov. 23, 10:30 a.m.** — CyberNET's assets are placed in receivership.

**Tues. Nov. 23, noon** — Larry Andrus, CEO of Trivalent Group, receives call from SAN vendor XIOtec informing him of the RoadLink situation. He expresses interest in helping.

**Tues. Nov. 23, 12:02 p.m.** — Anthony speaks with Andrus for the first time.

**Tues. Nov. 23, 4 p.m.** — RoadLink proves ownership of servers and is granted permission to retrieve hardware and data.

**Wed. Nov. 24, 3:50 a.m.** —

CyberNET CEO Barton Watson commits suicide.

**Wed. Nov. 24, afternoon** — It begins snowing.

**Wed. Nov. 24, 7 p.m.** — Close of business for holiday weekend. Team of CyberNET engineers begins dismantling RoadLink USA network.

**Thurs. Nov. 25, 2 a.m.** — Forty-seven servers and various other devices arrive at Trivalent data center.

**Thurs. Nov. 25** — Thanksgiving.

**Fri. Nov. 26, morning** — CyberNET/Trivalent engineers begin installing RoadLink servers. CyberNET engineers learn they have been laid off.

**Fri. Nov. 26, noon** — XIOtec SAN expected at CyberNET.

**Fri. Nov. 26, 7 p.m.** — SAN arrives at CyberNET; engineers begin downloading 800Gb Roadlink database.

**Sat. Nov. 27, morning** — SAN arrives at Trivalent. Configuration begins.

**Sun. Nov. 28, noon** — First of RoadLink USA's 50 locations brought online.

**Sun. Nov. 28, 2 p.m.** — RoadLink's national network up and running.

**Mon. Nov. 29, 8 a.m.** — Business as usual for RoadLink USA customers and operations.

new SAN (which arrived seven hours late). By Sunday afternoon, the first of RoadLink's remote locations came online, and by that evening the entire virtual private network had been rebuilt.

"It was business as normal for our customers and operational people," Anthony said. "Everyone keeps telling me what a good job I did. But this took a lot of dedicated, talented people who had the desire to win."

"(It took) a phenomenal effort over the weekend to pull it together," Andrus said. "It's really amazing, I've never seen anything like it. This was a company that was going to go out of business at 8 o'clock on Monday morning, and two different engineering groups who didn't even know each other a week ago were able to seamlessly work together to get it done."

According to Hey, a project of this sort would usually take no less than two to three weeks, not including planning. "But they didn't have that long."

For the CyberNET engineers, two of whom are now temporarily employed by RoadLink at the Trivalent data center, the task was a matter of pride.

"It was an unfortunate situation for everyone, but I'm glad we were able to come through for RoadLink," Lemmenes said. "It would have been a shame if another business would have fallen because of this."

"We were thinking of how many hun-

dreds, if not thousands, of people it would affect," Ooyevaar added. "We didn't want what happened to us to happen to someone else."

For Anthony, the ordeal was an emotional time, as the realization of what lay ahead for CyberNET dawned at a celebration dinner with the group and their families on the Sunday after Thanksgiving.

"These guys worked so hard to make sure we didn't go down, in spite of personal tragedy and knowing their jobs were finished," Anthony said. "Those guys were proud as hell they finished the job. It was the last time they would work together. And when the adrenaline came down, they were worried about their kids' Christmas and mortgages and everything."

"It's a shame these guys are tainted by this thing. Their loyalty and dedication to work was unbelievable to watch."

Ooyevaar doesn't believe the CyberNET scandal will be a stigma upon his group. Of his 18-member team, five have already found new employment, and five are expecting offers in the next few weeks.

He also said that the RoadLink story was not an isolated incident.

"Different parts of the CyberNET Group splintered," he said. "Other project managers went off with other clients to make sure their companies stayed operational. They took on a lot of our Web site customers that still need support." **BJ**