



CASE STUDY: WAFFLE HOUSE

Data center services: A story of build versus buy

Colocation delivers a dynamic disaster recovery solution for Waffle House

Waffle House is a southern staple of good food and friendly service. Opened in 1955 to provide 24-hour sit-down table service, the restaurant has expanded into 25 states with each location offering service 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. To support this business, Waffle House requires a resilient IT infrastructure to promote operational integrity and compile, track and store its back-end office data across its 1,900+ nationwide locations.

- Extended value over what could be achieved internally
- Quick delivery mitigates potential risk exposure
- Outstanding customer service helps navigate IT direction
- Outsourcing delivers 24×7×365 support and better resource allocation

To build or to buy data center needs

Founded to pair quality food and a welcoming environment, Waffle House operates an on-premise data center in one of its locations. When an onsite environmental issue threatened the safety of this environment, the company knew it was time to implement a disaster recovery (DR) solution to protect its data from any future issues.

The question for Waffle House was whether to build a data center in one of its existing offices or to buy its data center needs from a colocation provider. The organization conducted an extensive review of the costs, timeline and requirements of building and managing its own data center and also spoke with colocation providers to better understand the value and expenses of an outsourced solution.

As part of this process, Waffle House consulted QTS, a next-generation data center services provider. Operating 26 data centers nationwide—and an additional two in the Netherlands—QTS possesses first-hand expertise on the costs, security and compliance needs, necessary redundancies, connectivity requirements and inherent challenges of building and managing a data center.

"We have tremendous experience building data centers," said Darryl Cox, Director of Sales at QTS. "Our goal was to provide them with the information that allowed them to choose the option that best aligned with their needs."

TCO analysis and connectivity costs points to colocation

QTS worked extensively with Waffle House, highlighting key considerations and critical needs, and encouraging Waffle House to look past strict cost outlay to fully understand the value colocation delivers.

As part of the buy-versus-build value proposition, Waffle House analyzed the costs, risks, capabilities and speed of implementation for both DR options, and found that QTS offered a level of service, security and functionality it could not match internally at the same cost.

Waffle House opted to implement a DR solution in QTS' 385,000 square foot facility in Suwanee, Georgia, replicating its financial, inventory management and supply chain management services to the site. With N+1 functionality across its power, cooling and security capabilities, the site provides improved operational integrity. Its security features—including exterior fencing, video surveillance, 24×7 security personnel, card readers, and biometric and iris scanners—provide a heightened level of physical security not easily replicated in an on-premise facility. QTS' expansive list of connectivity options also makes connectivity less expensive than it would be from Waffle House's own environment.





"When we considered the overall value and resilience we would get with QTS, it more than made up for the minimal cost difference," said Mike Howard, Chief Information Officer/Controller at Waffle House. "QTS reduced our risk and provided a level of performance we could not have achieved on our own."

However, it was QTS' dedication to customer service that tipped the scales.

"We were extremely impressed by the time and care QTS took in helping us make our decision," said Ian Davidson, IT Director. "They went above and beyond to ensure we understood every element of the build process, and gave us the information we needed to more fully understand the total cost of ownership and make a sound decision."

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Mike Howard, CIO/Controller, Waffle House

Top-notch service and robust capabilities position Waffle House for the future

Today, Waffle House maintains an on-premise data center for its production environment and relies on QTS for its DR needs. This outsourced solution offers built-in redundancies to ensure Waffle House can safely and effectively recover its data in the face of a disaster. The solution also allowed Waffle House to avoid the large-scale capital expenses of building a data center. Waffle House now relies on QTS to manage and maintain the data center infrastructure—alleviating its internal IT team of this time-intensive task.

With leading-edge security practices and around-the-clock expert support and monitoring, QTS also provides a more intense level of protection than Waffle House could have achieved with an internal environment staffed only during work hours. QTS stays abreast of the latest security and compliance demands to reinforce this landscape and help Waffle House meet its own compliance obligations.

"Using QTS for our DR needs gives us tremendous peace of mind," said Ian Davidson, IT Director. "We know our systems and data are protected in even the worst scenarios. This goes a long way in letting us focus on maintaining the quality of our business."

As a customer-oriented business, Waffle House also appreciates QTS' responsiveness and commitment to service. This customer-centric approach to data center service delivery is at the heart of QTS' business model, and is quantified by its NPS score, which nearly doubles the rating of the closest data center company.

Waffle House is so pleased with QTS it brought its executive leadership team onsite to showcase the Suwanee facility and maintain a dialogue around future opportunities.

"We've been extremely happy with the service and capabilities of QTS," said Ian Davidson, IT Director. "We felt confident we were going to get a really good experience with QTS, and we were right. They've been a true partner in this IT journey, every step of the way."

About QTS

QTS Realty Trust, Inc. (NYSE: QTS) is a leading provider of data center solutions across a diverse footprint spanning more than 6 million square feet of owned mega scale data center space within North America and Europe. Through its software-defined technology platform, QTS is able to deliver secure, compliant infrastructure solutions, robust connectivity and premium customer service to leading hyperscale technology companies, enterprises, and government entities. Visit QTS at www.qtsdatacenters.com, call toll-free 877.QTS.DATA or follow on Twitter @DataCenters_QTS.