



# HELP WHEN IT'S NEEDED:

A Conversation with  
**ERNST CONCRETE  
ENTERPRISES, INC.**



Since we pride ourselves on our communication with our customers, we thought it might be a good idea to give them a voice. So, we asked the folks at O'Brien Communications Group (OCG) to talk with some of them. This is a transcript of a conversation OCG had with David Alexander and Dave Hodge from Ernst Concrete Enterprises, Inc., with offices in Dayton, Ohio, and Lawrenceville, Georgia.

**OCG:** When and how did you first start working with D9?

**DAVE:** In July of 2019, we had a ransomware attack.

**OCG:** Worst case scenario.

**DAVE:** Yep. We had to rebuild our whole infrastructure, our whole network, everything. D9 came in and helped us rebuild. Gave us new tools and new security protocols and things like that.

**OCG:** Did you have any idea before July of 2019 that you were as vulnerable as you were?

**DAVE:** I knew if we didn't make changes we could be. Did I think we'd get hit before we made those changes? No. I think it's fair to say we lacked awareness of the prevalence and the severity of the threat potential.

**OCG:** You're not alone.

**DAVE:** Right. If a concrete company can be a target, the mom-and-pop shop down the street can be a target, too, if they have insurance. And we were recovering from a tornado that came through on Memorial Day of that year. So, it was a double-whammy.

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They were worth more than what we invested in them because they saved us from having to pay the ransom, and they kept our business up and running. It was an existential event, frankly. And they saved us.

**OCG:** Did you mean to suggest you can be a target just by having cyber insurance, meaning that hackers know you can pay? That's probably why cyber insurers are so strict about who they'll insure because they want to make sure their policyholders have certain safeguards in place. We hadn't connected those dots before you said that.

**DAVID:** I buy cyber insurance now for access to additional resources, beyond what D9 does to help out. Cyber threats have evolved so quickly over the last five years, we were caught as it started to explode. Our security was almost security through obscurity. Who was going to find us? Who would think a concrete company is a good place to attack? But now it's anybody.

**OCG:** It's kind of like a combination of cat and mouse and one upmanship. People get a head start and then they catch up and then somebody else jumps ahead. And the other thing about cyber insurance companies is they didn't know what they didn't know. So, their underwriting guidelines were inadequate.

**DAVID:** Oh, they took a bath. Now, to be considered for cyber insurance, you have to have multifactor authentication, at a bare minimum, to even be considered for coverage.

**OCG:** From a financial perspective, it's interesting to have you on this call, David, since you're the CFO. Do you notice any specific return on investment from working with D9, like the ability to get better insurance coverage at a better rate?

**DAVID:** I can tell you my return on D9 is that we didn't have to pay a very large ransom right off the bat.

**OCG:** They saved you from that first threat?

**DAVID:** They did. They were worth more than what we invested in them because they saved us from having to pay the ransom, and they kept our business up and running. It was an existential event, frankly. And they saved us.

**OCG:** It reminds us of a superhero. They kind of came in and blocked the villains.

**DAVID:** D9 was quick to respond with the new hardware we needed to rebuild. They provided support and manpower, boots on the ground for us.

**OCG:** And why did you pick D9?

**DAVID:** Actually, we had one or two other organizations we tried to work with, but they weren't responsive. D9 got us the resources we needed. They did then, and they do now. Eric will jump in. Sarv will jump in. Any of their senior people will jump in. When we contacted the other firms, we were sitting here dying, and they were creating sales documents for me to sign. With D9. I get what I need when I need it. Six people right off the bat. They brought one guy in from Pittsburgh.

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**OCG:** From your perspective, Dave, as the IT guy, how would you describe the caliber of people D9 has working there and what they're able to do.

**DAVE:** I feel like I have a pool of talent. I have an IT structure that's better than me in some ways and not as good as me in others. If I make a phone call to D9, I have support for things I don't know and things I'd rather not do because I don't have the time. I can make one phone call and get everything from different levels of expertise and skill to the deployment of printers on a print server. It's been that way for three years. I call one person and get all the way up to the top network infrastructure guys.

**DAVID:** And if they don't have them, they'll find somebody does. They have resources around the country they can call and pull in.

**OCG:** Eric has told us that's why he started D9 in the first place. He wanted to see smaller companies get the services he was delivering when he worked for large companies. His timing seems good because hackers are going after smaller companies now, and more and more of them are vulnerable.

**DAVE:** To this day, he still touts that as his business model. They want to help people who need the help and those who might not know they need it yet.

**OCG:** Do you want to share anything specific about what they did and how they went about it?

**DAVE:** The feeling I got was they weren't coming in and taking over. They were part of the team. They became part of our team. That was important. When Eric first came in, we were looking at each other sideways [laughs]. But it didn't last long because I knew he was there to help us. It wasn't like D9 came in to take over, and we'd never see them again. Three years in, they're still part of the team.

**OCG:** Is there anything else you'd like to share with us?

**DAVID:** They're our most trusted IT consultants. Before we do anything of substance to our network security, we sit down with them. It's great to have somebody who has that knowledge and will bat ideas back and forth and work with us. There's no arrogance on their part, and they understand there are multiple ways to attack a problem.

**OCG:** Thank you for sharing that. Given the technical nature of their work, we might have overlooked the consultative nature of what they do.

**DAVE:** I'll share on more thing: Two or three days ago, I talked to Eric about a problem we're having with our print servers. He said, "I know a solution." And I just had a call with a company that does cloud-based print management. I didn't have to call the vendor. He called the vendor. That's what D9 does. If they can't fix something, they know someone who can.

**DAVID:** Yes. They always have a solution.