

AAA of South Jersey

Customer Snapshot

Name

AAA of South Jersey

Overview

Regional motor club

Location

Serves members in four New Jersey counties: Camden, Gloucester, Salem, and Cumberland

Configuration

6 Microsoft Windows servers, 2 VMware ESX servers running 8 virtual machines, one HP-UX server for member data

Capacity

250 GB backed up each night

AAA of South Jersey Uses EVault to Protect and Secure its Member Data

The roughly 220,000 AAA members serviced by AAA of South Jersey have come to expect the availability of ready travel help and always-on emergency automotive assistance, wherever and whenever it might be needed. According to Anthony Ardito, director of IT at the South Jersey motor club, that trust in AAA's ability to provide on-going member services is not taken lightly.

That was one reason the South Jersey club decided to invest in an upgrade to better protect its critical member data and the auto club's day-to-day transactions and operations.

Goals

After starting his current position at the club close to two years ago, one of Ardito's first priorities was to ensure all critical systems and data were being adequately protected. Only once that was achieved could he move on to other important system upgrades. After finding spotty, inefficient tape-based backups with no remote backup capabilities, Ardito and his IT team set out to find and implement a new backup solution. They hoped such a solution would:

- Adequately protect all AAA member data and systems, including that stored predominantly in the HP-UX system
- Establish a remote backup process to protect against any site-wide disaster
- Implement faster, disk-based backup in place of tape
- Find a system that could help them reduce their recovery point to the past four hours, instead of the past 24 hours
- Meet current backup windows

Challenges

Like many organizations of its size, AAA of South Jersey had come to rely on tape backup via several mini-DAT tape drives that were either included in the servers or externally attached.

This posed a few issues. First, as data in key servers grew, backups became harder to manage. One Microsoft Windows file share had grown so large that the IT team was unable to back up its contents within the backup window. "It got to the point where the person in charge at the time had to say, 'If you put a file on here, it won't be backed up."

Case Study

AAA of South Jersey

Goals

- Ensure all AAA member data is adequately protected
- Implement secure remote backups
- Replace tape backups with automated disk backups
- Reduce RPO from 24 hours to four
- Speed backups to meet existing backup windows

Solutions

Installed EVault Software locally for backup every four hours. A remote vault at a branch office ensures recovery from a site-wide disaster.

Result

Backups are now secure, automated and largely hands-free. Disk-based backups also ensure rapid backup or recovery, where needed.

If it's gone, it's gone," he said.

One of the most pressing issues in Ardito's mind, however, was the IT group's level of preparedness for a site-wide disaster. "When I got here, the way the systems were being backed up was definitely not adequate. There was no off-site storage of the tapes," he said. "The tapes were stored in a safe in a room right next to the server room. In a physical disaster, that wouldn't help us a whole lot."

Solutions

The club explored and discarded a few options. Shipping tapes off-site via courier was problematic and risky. Ardito also looked at hiring a well-known managed offsite backup/disaster recovery service. He ruled that out as too costly for the club's not-for-profit budget.

Several things appealed to Ardito and his team about EVault Software. They liked the ability to set up a disk-based backup "vault" at one of the branch offices, while encrypting and sending only changed data blocks from the primary office—all across their existing T-1 line. Although backup tapes were cheaper short-term, Ardito also knew the cost would definitely add up as time went by.

When contrasted to the more costly, third-party backups he'd explored for the club, he also found the cost of EVault Software much more inline with what the club had in mind. EVault's support for multiple scenarios and environments—including VMware and the backup of open files—was also a plus. When it came to VMware, Ardito also liked the fact that EVault offered favorable licensing—based on each physical ESX server being protected, as opposed to each virtual machine.

Other big factors in the choice of EVault Software were the company's established reputation, its high level of support, and the growing list of customers already using the software. "We like to go with established, well-known companies. EVault is one of them," said Ardito, noting his positive experience since deploying EVault Software, "The support has been excellent. They keep cases open as long as we need. I'd say it's probably one of the top levels of support we've had."

Today, the auto club has a remote "vault" in its Logan Township office, which automatically performs nightly backups of critical data found at the primary Voorhees office. Wanting faster, local restore access and a shorter recovery point than 24 hours then led to Ardito install an EVault DualVault configuration. A second, local vault now resides at the Voorhees office where data changes are also backed up every four hours.

Results

After about a week of running backups with EVault, Ardito and his team were convinced enough to shut off the majority of their tape-based backups. They now only use tape for critical subsets of data as an extra layer of insurance and archival storage.

Today, members' critical data stored in the primary HP-UX database system takes roughly 30 minutes to back up to the remote vault each night. More frequent, local backups are even quicker, taking about 10 minutes to complete. This is a far cry from the four hours formerly needed for backups to tape.

Employees' already-open files are now also protected, thanks to EVault's Open File Manager (OFM), he said. The highly automated backup process also frees up his team considerably, with little time now spent scrambling to change out tapes and stay current with backups.

Case Study

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Most importantly, Ardito now has the assurance he needs to promise the CEO and the club's many members that their member data is fully protected and secure from virtually any event. "One thing with AAA is safety and security. We essentially need to be there when our members pull in for service....Our CEO put it the right way: EVault's a good sleeping pill. You rest a lot easier at night knowing everything is covered. We know that we have a secure way of backing up our members' data now."

Take the Next Step

To learn more about EVault storage solutions, call us at 1.877.901.DATA (3282), email us at concierge@evault.com, or visit us at www.evault.com.



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