

Community First Data Services

Customer Benefits

Name

Community First
Data Services

Overview

Banking | Finance

Location

Cheyenne, Wyoming

EVault Product

EVault® Software with
Agents for SQL, Exchange,
SharePoint, Linux and
Open File Manager

IT Environment

Vaults in two data centers
protecting 194 Windows
and Linux servers as well
as PCs in multiple locations

Community First Data Services speeds backup, protects core systems with EVault Software

When customers walk into their local bank, few consider the often complex network of IT systems, applications and back-end data processing that goes into ensuring core systems stay up and running or into securing, tracking and preserving account activity. Yet, that's exactly the job of Wyoming's Community First Data Services (CFDS). The Cheyenne headquartered data processing company is a wholly owned subsidiary of American National Bank, a regional community bank chain owned by the Denver-based Sturm Financial Group (SFG). As part of its charter, CFDS provides mainframe processing and network services such as application server management, check item processing and data and telecom services to all 42 of SFG's bank offices located throughout Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas, and Missouri. CFDS also supports other non-affiliated banks outside of SFG as well.

Goals

Having grown accustomed to meeting several data restore requests per day, CFDS's Network Data Security Specialist Jim Barbero was familiar with the time typically needed to restore individual user files. He also knew how much more time (in days) was needed to restore any of the bank's 40+ SQL Server-based databases, not to mention servers supporting the organization's 1,000+ mailbox Microsoft Exchange environment.

Barbero and his team hoped new data protection technologies could offer more options in the following areas:

- Significantly faster restore and rebuild times that could help bring database systems or whole servers back up—even from major hardware failure
- Longer data retention times—especially for critical systems like the bank's Patriot Officer application from GlobalVision Systems
- Reduced IT time spent on operations surrounding data backup or recovery
- The chance to have a faster, more automated and reliable off-site recovery process

Case Study

Community First
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Goals

- Faster restores/
rebuids
of servers and
database
applications
- Longer retention times
for more critical data
- Reduce IT operations
time spent on backup
and recovery
- Replace tape backup
with faster more
reliable disk-based
backup
- Implement faster more
reliable off-site
recovery
- Cross-platform
protection eliminates
multi-product hassles
- Deep integration with
Microsoft servers
and clients delivers
unparalleled protection
- Fast, secure cloud
connectivity ensures
cost-effective offsite
protection against site
disasters
- All-in-one appliance
simplifies procurement,
configuration, and
deployment
- Single provider
eliminates multi-
vendor hassles

“We wanted to find a system with better speed and reliability than what we’d been using,” he said.

Challenges

After a loss of data, it was common for individual file restores to take several hours to perform, as Barbero first hunted for the correct tape then located the specific file. This process could take considerably longer, however, if a SQL Server database was involved or a complete server rebuild was needed. The need to constantly shuttle backup tapes off-site was also time-consuming and risky if a disaster struck and faster recovery was needed.

“We started looking at what would happen if a server actually crashed. We’d have to reload Microsoft® Windows, and would need all the copies of the software. Given that, to build a server actually turned out to be a two-day project,” said Barbero. “Some of our applications can’t be down for two days.”

One such event brought the need for better data protection to the fore. A server went down and brought a few core banking functions to a halt in the interim. That’s when CFDS’s already hands-on CEO, Tony Minnick, became personally involved in finding a better solution. Said Barbero, “That was the fire that got things going. We started looking for a solution that would let us back up and restore several servers more quickly.”

Solutions

CFDS enlisted the help of Colorado-based HEIT, an integrator and reseller with expertise in financial industry IT issues. According to Barbero and Brent Burkhart, a systems and development manager who oversees much of the Microsoft SQL Server environments, the EVault® data protection solution from EVault, A Seagate Company, quickly rose to the top of their list. One area of note was EVault’s delta deduplication functionality, which transmits only changed data blocks since the last backup. Since transmission rates and bandwidths varied greatly between branches and the Cheyenne facility, this was a plus. EVault’s tight integration with Microsoft SQL Server and the availability of a special EVault Agent for SQL Server was another plus. The EVault Agent for SQL gives them a Microsoft-approved method for protecting SQL databases.

Said Barbero, “There are many times when we need to do research or repair on a database and we have to sort from a certain day. So, I liked the fact that EVault would let us bring the data back from a certain date and even bring it back to a different location.”

After the CEO ultimately decided on EVault, CFDS implemented an EVault Software solution, with one disk-based EVault “vault” in its Cheyenne data center and a second offsite “vault” in Denver. Both systems now reflect up-to-date, nightly backup data for the nearly 200 servers CFDS oversees in Cheyenne and the various branches.

“From my point of view, EVault stands out for a lot of things, but mostly the quickness of restores. Bottom line from my perspective, that’s the most important thing to me.”

Jim Barbaro,
Community First Data Services

Case Study

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Results

Barbero and Burkhart have been impressed with the positive changes EVault has delivered—especially in the area of database restores. Instead of requiring several hours—or, even, days—to perform a restore, Barbero now uses EVault to restore in just minutes. “We can restore to the same or different SQL server or to a flat file with just a few clicks,” said Burkhart. “It’s nice to have EVault in place. We can be up and running again without anyone knowing there was ever an issue.”

Barbero says most user file restores can now be done in 10 minutes instead of the four hours it used to take. Time to perform backups has also dropped dramatically. He now performs full nightly backups, a process which has become mostly hands-free.

In fact, Barbero’s time to babysit backups or restore data has dropped dramatically since EVault. “I probably spend 15 hours a week less, but am still able to do more restores than I was before,” he confirmed. The company is also able to retain significantly more data online for longer, including 180 days of backups for the Patriot Officer system.

Barbero even had the chance to see how EVault could help with server rebuilds after a recent data center move led to a server hardware crash. “I was able to come in at 5:00 pm and was out of here before midnight,” he said. “Without EVault, I know that one would have taken at least two days to rebuild.” That was even without using EVault System Restore, a bare-metal restore option he’s since begun to evaluate for even faster rebuild times.

Both Burkhart and Barbero give high marks to EVault for overall flexibility and speed. The company’s internal auditors also appear to approve. “Normally, the auditors meet with me each year about the backups,” he said. “But, they didn’t need to meet me this year because all the paperwork was in order; and the scheme and EVault solution were acceptable. They didn’t have to worry with EVault.”

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.



Headquarters | 3101 Jay Street, Suite 110 | Santa Clara, CA 95054 | 877.901.DATA (3282) | www.evault.com
Netherlands (EMEA HQ) +31 (0) 73 648 1400 | **France** +33 (0) 1 55 27 35 24 | **UK** +44 (0) 1932 445 370

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