

Waterbury Public Schools

Customer Snapshot

Name

Waterbury Public Schools

Overview

Education

Location

Waterbury, Connecticut

EVault Product

EVault® Software with DualVault configuration and EVault System Restore with protection for desktop computers, systems running IBM i, Microsoft® Exchange, SQL Server, SharePoint; EVault Open File Manager

Waterbury Public Schools Reduces DR Risk with Affordable EVault Software Solution

The Waterbury Public Schools school district is large by any standard. Accommodating 18,000 Connecticut children and 2,000 staff members, the district's K–12 operations include 20 elementary schools, four middle schools and four high schools. Continued investment in both the arts and technology are two components of the district's success. According to IT System Administrator Will Zhuta, the district's 11-person IT staff keeps very busy maintaining its over 2,000 desktop computers, not to mention several food service and student management applications. The team also manages traditional installations of Microsoft Office, SharePoint and more than 3,000 Microsoft Exchange mailboxes.

Goals

A few factors led Zhuta and his team to conclude the time was right to overhaul the district's data protection processes. He hoped whatever solution they found would:

- Give Waterbury Public Schools a painless and cost-effective off-site solution for disaster recovery
 - Significantly speed backup and restore times
 - Replace tape with more streamlined, reliable disk-based backup
 - Minimize the time needed to rebuild or restore critical applications in the event of failure
 - Free IT staff to perform other tasks beyond lengthy backups or restores
- Zhuta also hoped to gain better peace of mind about the district's ability to bounce back quickly from any potential data disruption—big or small.

“Working with a vendor you can trust and a reseller you can trust, you can't really put a dollar value on it.”

Will Zhuta,
IT System Administrator

Case Study

Waterbury Public Schools

IT Environment

15 servers running Microsoft® Windows 2003, an IBM i midrange server, and Microsoft Windows desktop computers. Application data protected includes:

- Tenex student management system
- ProgressBook Student management & parent portal
- Food Service Programs
- Microsoft Exchange
- SharePoint & miscellaneous file shares

Goals

- Establish efficient off-site disaster recovery
- Improve backup reliability and restore speeds by switching from tape to disk-based backup
- Reduce rebuild time needed to restore critical applications
- Minimize time spent on backup/restore by limited IT staff

Solutions

Install an EVault DualVault configuration for fast backup and rapid off-site recovery

Challenges

Some events led Waterbury Public Schools to ultimately choose EVault Software from EVault, A Seagate Company, over the prior tape-based backup process it had used with Symantec NetBackup:

- The district's Symantec software license was soon to expire
- An outside auditor recommended the school district implement a faster, more defined off-site recovery plan
- The IT staff had become dissatisfied with the slowness, management time needed, lack of efficiency and questionable reliability of its prior tape-based backup infrastructure

Summarizing results from the audit, Zhuta said, "The auditor told us we needed a better process to ensure quick recovery of operations in the event of an emergency," Tape backup issues also continued to need on-going monitoring by IT staffers. "Arms would fail on the tape drives. Then we'd wonder if a tape would or wouldn't work when we needed it," he recalled.

Solutions

NSI, one of the district's trusted local technology partners and resellers, suggested Zhuta take a closer look at EVault Software for rapid, disk-based backup and off-site restores. As Zhuta recalled, seeing EVault in action at a nearby NSI customer site was an eye-opener. "They said, 'Let's go look at [EVault] before we try to sell you this.' We went up the street to Naugatuck Savings Bank since they were also using EVault. Their Tech showed me how easy it was to drag and drop to restore, and how easy it would be for us to do it in-house," he said.

That first-hand look left a strong impression, which only strengthened as Zhuta compared EVault to other solutions. "I walked out impressed and said, 'Let's bring them in.'" Two EVault Software "vaults" now perform nightly data protection for the school district. Part of EVault's comprehensive DualVault off-site recovery solution, each disk-based backup "vault" resides in a building 15 miles from the other and the backup data is sent to both vaults. EVault now protects 15 of the school district's core Windows servers and applications, an IBM i server running the Tenex student management system, and over desktop computers used by key school district administrators. According to Zhuta, application-specific agents and operation system agents for both Microsoft Windows and the IBM i have made data protection much easier.

Results

As Zhuta recalled, EVault consistently rose to the top in his comparison against other disk-based data protection solutions he evaluated. He gave EVault particularly high marks on its overall cost, the completeness of the solution, and key software features like its EVault System Restore option.

"Before EVault, we had a mail server stay down for two days while we restored data from backup tapes and rebuilt the server. Going without e-mail that long, people started to panic in the school district. EVault's bare-metal restore option [EVault System Restore] was one thing that differentiated the solution from everything else we looked at," he said, noting, "After seeing a demo of it, we knew we could restore all our applications and the operating system without having to install all the service packs. Instead, we could just basically drag-and-drop to have an operational server. That was huge for us! In the future, we know we can now restore our mail server in a few hours instead of the two days we spent before."

Case Study

Waterbury Public Schools

Noting how easy it is to cross-train staff on use of the system, Zhuta also had high praise for EVault's comprehensiveness. "EVault was a complete solution for doing off-site DR. Everything was there. I didn't have to worry if I bought a product from someone else that could only do so much, or deal with the fact that someone would sell me the hardware and someone else would have to do the off-site," he said.

Also important was the degree of trust he developed in both NSI and EVault. It soon played out in their joint ability to deliver on every promise made to the school district. "The EVault solution was reasonably priced and offered a complete solution. EVault also had a great working relationship with our reseller whom we trusted and who had introduced us to the product. The whole process was just so professional," he said. "Working with a vendor you can trust and a reseller you can trust, you can't really put a dollar value on it. They told us up-front what the cost would be and followed through. People forget, but trust like that is so important."

In total, Zhuta can't discount the greater peace of mind and backup/restore speed improvements he's since experienced with EVault Software DualVault solution. "The thing I like about it is that I don't even worry about having to restore data anymore. You have that peace of mind in the back of your head. If somebody messes something up, I now just go back to the [EVault software-based] vault and restore it. That's huge when you think about the size of our district and all the people we have to satisfy. It's also huge if we ever have a major failure from some type of natural disaster or fire that could disrupt services. Now that we have EVault, it's something we just don't have to worry about anymore." Zhuta remains happy with his choice of EVault. "If you think about all the things you no longer have to worry about compared to tape backup, EVault was worth the cost right there."

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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