

The Oldest Private Research University in the West relies on Sonasoft as a One-Stop Shop for their Backup, High Availability and Disaster Recovery needs.

The Information Technology department of Office of the Provost at University of Southern California (USC) used tapes as a backup medium, which they found to be unreliable and time-consuming. It was taking them hours and sometimes a full day to restore the backups. Also, they were looking for an integrated solution that would help with backup, recovery and high availability. Following a careful investigation and research, USC deployed SonaSafe for Exchange for data protection, high availability and disaster recovery.

Situation

USC uses emails extensively for communication within and outside the university. The backup system that consisted of tapes was not enough to meet the growing needs of their IT department. USC did not have any means of sending the data offsite in case an earthquake struck, or in case the Exchange server crashed. This led to the search for a solution that would allow USC to set up an off-site server, which will be readily available in case of a natural or man-made disaster. Another major requirement of the project was to look for a solution that would minimize or eliminate the need for tapes, which were found to be a very slow, unreliable backup and restore medium. The need to recover granular-level items like single email, mailbox or folders seemed to emerge as well and USC was finding it very difficult to accomplish the recovery of these items using their existing backup system. The time and effort spent to insure valuable data led them to search for a solution that was easy to use and highly automated.

Solution

USC used tape-based backup systems for a long time, but it was getting to a point where these products seemed limited in terms of protecting their Exchange data. Also they did not provide the data insurance that they expected or desired. During this project, USC looked at various backup and failover products in the market; nevertheless, none of these products seemed to meet their project needs and requirements. If one offered backup capability, the other only did replication. The obvious choice was Sonasoft, since it provided a One-Stop shop for most of their project wish list. SonaSafe not only offered reliable data backup and recovery but also enabled them to set up an Exchange standby server in Washington DC, giving total protection and high availability

Solution Overview

Customer Profile

Along with being one of the top college football teams in the country, USC stands quite high in rank for their world-class research and academic programs.

Business Situation

Tape Backups were slow and unreliable. Looking for an integrated backup and replication solution

Solution

SonaSafe for Exchange provided High Availability & Disaster Recovery

Benefits

- Provides Backup & Failover
- Cut down on backup/restore time
- Easy Install
- Great Customer Support

Software and Services

Microsoft Windows 2000 Advanced Server
Microsoft SQL Server 2000 Standard Edition
SonaSafe for Exchange Server 3.5

Hardware

The production environment relies on:

- 2 X Dell PowerEdge 2950
4GB RAM, RAID 5
- 1 X Dell Poweredge 2850
4GB RAM, RAID 1
(Application Server)
- EMC CX-310 SAN



for the Exchange server. In the words of Ali Sadr, “The replication feature that Sonasoft offers is better than the competition. I not only depend on the replicated server in Washington, DC but I can also use it for maintenance purposes; I can now check my replication by failing over just one mailbox so I know it is working. This was something that really attracted me to Sonasoft.”

Another factor that USC found appealing was the close association of Sonasoft with Microsoft and their great success in serving some of the top educational institutions in the United States.

Performance Gains

As the name suggests, Office of the Provost at USC consists of management level people, so it is very critical to protect their emails and data. Therefore, it was absolutely crucial for the USC IT staff to pick the right solution that would enable security of critical data on Exchange server. A lot of time was spent before the decision was made to go with Sonasoft, which was definitely the perfect solution for them. Even user manuals were compared in the process. Some of the features of SonaSafe that USC truly liked included its ability to centralize the management of the entire process and the ability to easily schedule the frequency of the backup and recovery tasks. It has saved the university a lot of time and effort by scheduling the tasks and then leaving them to Sonasoft to manage. Its ability to create mailbox level plans has helped them to prioritize the backup and replication tasks as well. The capability to perform incremental backups has helped them a great deal. There are many other products in the market that replicate data and take it off-site, but no solution in the market gave USC the ability to failover a single mailbox. Often companies, with a DR solution in place, are reluctant to test the failover, since it requires to failover the entire server, which may not be easy to do. Most other solutions require professional services to failback to the production environment. SonaSafe has helped USC a great deal and has given them additional satisfaction in that they now are able to test disaster recovery preparedness by failing over a single mailbox.

Time Savings

SonaSafe’s point and click technology has made life easier for USC’s IT staff in that it is very easy to create plans for backup, recovery and also replication. USC particularly likes the web console because it is user-friendly, easy to navigate and can be accessed from anywhere via a VPN tunnel. Sonasoft has not only cut back on the time it took them to backup and recover, but it has also given the IT staff peace of mind because now they are able to failover to the replicated server with just a few points and clicks. Sonasoft’s ability to recover single emails or folders in a matter of seconds or minutes is particularly appealing, as compared to hours or a day of time that they found quite common using other backup software.

Installation

SonaSafe implementation was easy and smooth. At the end of a careful and well thought-out investigation, Sonasoft was chosen as the product that USC wanted to include as part of their IT infrastructure. The IT staff found the Sonasoft support team to be very helpful in recommending the best practices to get the optimal performance from their system and configuration. “At times Sonasoft’s support even went out of their way and provided us with expertise beyond and above Sonasoft’s application. I’m very impressed by their timely and quality support”, Mr. Sadr said.

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About Sonasoft®

Sonasoft Corp. automates the disk-to-disk backup and recovery process for Microsoft Exchange, SQL and Windows Servers with its groundbreaking SonaSafe® Point-Click Recovery® solutions. SonaSafe is the only product that provides an integrated backup/recovery and replication solution for Exchange and SQL servers. Designed to simplify and eliminate human error in the backup and recovery process, SonaSafe solutions also centralize the management of multiple servers and provide a cost-effective turnkey disaster recovery strategy for companies of all sizes.

For more information, please visit www.sonasoft.com.