

Simple Yet Powerful Data Protection

FINANCIAL INDUSTRY SUCCESS STORY:
Financial Asset Management Systems
David Kennedy, Director of Information
Technology



About David Kennedy

David is Director of IT for Financial Asset Management Systems of Atlanta, GA, steering the debt collections organization's technology team in systems planning, network infrastructure, computer operations, data processing, security, telecommunications, and office systems. With 22 years of information technology experience and an ITIL certification, David's leadership affords FAMS a foundation of proven systems decisions and support.



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Solution Highlights

Industry

- Financial, Collections

Protected Platforms:

- Windows 2003, 2008, 2012
- Linux

Data Protected

- Files
- Applications
- SQL Server 2008

Challenges

- Virtual and physical assets
- Legacy tape backups
- De-duplicaton
- Encryption

Solution

- UEB for virtual machines (VMs) at primary and DR sites
- SAN backup for 30 VMs
- Plans to add a second SAN for 10 more VMs, and for an encrypted device

Benefits

- Single-pane-of-glass management
- Encrypted data meets multiple industry regulations
- Accommodation of legacy tape backup
- Reduced time to perform backups
- Cost savings

Customer Profile

For twenty years, Financial Asset Management Systems (FAMS) has been “turning paper into gold,” performing their collections magic for healthcare, government, education, financial services, and media customers from both its headquarters in Georgia and its Missouri satellite location. The trick to FAMS’s quality service: applying processes that effectively trace people and assets, capturing revenue through the company’s sophisticated brand of accounts receivable acumen.

Delivering this sort of top-notch service to customers depends on a convergence of factors, not the least of these being use of quality data. It’s no mystery, then, that keeping FAMS business information protected and immediately available are pivotal to this industry leader’s success.

Challenges

FAMS’s six-days-a-eeek operation demands systems that match their organization’s ability to provide agile, relentless service. Unfortunately, their original purchase of a known vendor’s backup and recovery solution didn’t quite fit that bill.

“Historically, administration of backups at FAMS has been a time consuming process with a difficult system,” Kennedy reflects. “The time it took to back up and to administer the backup jobs kept getting longer and longer because of our data footprint, encryption needs, and complexity of the environment.”

Beyond these concerns, FAMS also discovered that maintaining their incumbent solution complicated rather than complemented their daily operations. And, adding insult to injury, that solution came with a recurring price tag that made the FAMS IT director wince more than a little.

For a New York minute, Kennedy took a look at one popular backup and recovery solution as a possible swap. He soon discovered, however, that it protects only virtual environments, and leaves no alternative for businesses with tape backups other than to do a complete replacement with their offering. Kennedy immediately saw the dead end in that approach. He needed a data protection strategy that would allow FAMS to maintain their legacy tape backups, for as long as they needed, without forcing them into newer technologies before they were financially and operationally prepared to make that change.

It soon became evident that FAMS needed to invest in a more substantial solution to their data protection needs and so, Kennedy turned his attention to Unitrends.

Benefits

When it comes to reasons for his choice in protecting FAMS data, Kennedy commends, “Unitrends proved to be a worthy product because of its straight-forward approach to administration, speed of the backups, ease of restores (both image and file-level) and flexibility with our environment.”

Mixed-Bag Environment Friendly

Unitrends single-pane-of-glass Web interface allows Kennedy’s team to orchestrate with ease FAMS backup operations for an array of systems and data protection needs. That systems environment includes mostly Windows 2003, 2008, and 2012 servers, with some Linux servers in the mix.

Smooth and Secure



"Unitrends offers a solid solution to server protection that requires less administration, but all of the features of much more expensive products."

- David Kennedy,
Director of IT

"This improved our backup window from 12 hours down to about 2 hours. This has probably saved about \$15k in full-time equivalent resources a year, with the straightforward approach to administration of the system."

- David Kennedy,
Director of IT

Unitrends' deduplication technology ensures protection of FAMS' file, application, and SQL Server 2008 data, with the kind of efficiency that saves both space and transmission time, while preserving accessibility. Kennedy recognizes this as the sort of elegance that separates good systems from great ones: Information that is most current is also the most accessible, while older data is kept equally safe, and out of the way in the event of near-term data recovery.

And the choice remains with FAMS to encrypt as needed, making compliance with industry standards simple without the backup, replication, and recovery drag associated with an all-or-none encryption approach.

Freedom from Growing Pains

FAMS deployed the Unitrends solution, Kennedy says, "as a virtual machine in both our primary and DR sites. We are backing up to a storage area network (SAN) target for 30 VMs currently, and plan to add 10 more to another SAN target. In addition, we are in the process of adding an encrypted external drive as well as replicating our backups to our DR site."

For FAMS, adoption of Unitrends for all their backup and recovery needs is full-steam ahead. Their solution can both match and keep pace with the company's here and now, and its technology roadmap, too.

The Price is Right

Initially, Unitrends cost FAMS, "about as much as the annual maintenance cost of our former solution," reflects Kennedy. "Plus, Unitrends doesn't require endless modules for functionality of their product. In terms of backup time, Unitrends leverages the VMware snaps for backup versus how we had our former solution implemented to back up each client."

The IT director's satisfaction is well founded. With their backup window decreasing by ten hours, FAMS can realize a savings Kennedy calculates at roughly \$15k annually.

Technology for Today and Tomorrow

The Kennedy not only leads FAMS information technology division, but is also directly involved in on boarding new clients, developing client interfaces, and reporting for all clients. He trains an experienced eye on providing support that improves overall uptime and availability of system and network resources—the kind of support that results in increased customer satisfaction and engenders more business. For Kennedy, Unitrends afforded the perfect solution to FAMS' collective data protection goals in terms of recovery, growth, and value, allowing the company to set a technology course that enhances its business horizons.

Perhaps what's most significant about the FAMS story is that the organization didn't really need to replace its backup and recovery solution; but Kennedy's good business sense led him to dig deeper, and to proactively ensure the best possible strategy for his company and its clients. "It wasn't required, but I felt that if we were going to leverage our VMware investment and spend time on other important projects, another solution needed to be found." In the spirit of simplification Unitrends seems to inspire, Kennedy's satisfaction with FAMS' chosen data protection solution couldn't be stated more succinctly: "It simply works."



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