UNITRENDS

"During our busy season we cannot afford any downtime. This solution keeps our business running, no matter what happens."

Luke Simpson, Firm Administrator, Ward & Uptigrove

QUICK FACTS

Industry
• Accounting, Financial

Protected Platforms
• Windows
• VMware
• Citrix

Challenges
• Slow backup and restores
• No bare metal restore capabilities
• Recovery of critical servers could tak days

Solution
• Unitrends Recovery Appliance

Benefits
• High-speed backup & recovery
• Bare metal backups for reliable, whole system recoveries
• Ability to run server backups

Customer Profile

Located in Listowel, Ontario, Ward & Uptigrove is one of southwestern Ontario's largest independent chartered accountant firms, providing professional accounting services since 1958.

With fifty-seven full- and part-time staff, the firm offers core services such as auditing, accounting and tax preparation to more than 3,000 clients, along with specialized services in the areas of human resources and financial planning.

Challenges

Like many accounting firms, Ward & Uptigrove has to deal with a hectic tax season to ensure all of its clients' accounts are dealt with according to strict federal and provincial deadlines.

"During tax season our staff and their computers often have to work around the clock," Luke Simpson, Firm Administrator, Ward & Uptigrove said. "Our old backup system required everyone to be logged out of the network while we copied data to tapes for safekeeping. As the amount of data we were storing grew, the length of time needed for backups became unacceptable."

At one point, a weekend backup of the company's 1TB of data was taking close to 30 hours due to the large number of small files spread across many servers. Locating and recovering accidentally deleted files was also a lengthy operation, as tapes were stored offsite and a busy accountant could be asked to wait for over a day for a simple file recovery that should take minutes.

Another worry was how quickly Ward & Uptigrove could rebuild a failed server using the existing tape-based system. The centralized Citrix XenApp servers had hundreds of accounting applications installed, and the thought of reinstalling everything was daunting.

"Typically, tape-based systems only back up data, not applications." explained Richard Mash, President of Network Partners. "Unless you have a system that can take snapshots or images of a running server, you're faced with the task of reinstalling the operating system and all the applications from scratch. The whole process can take several days to complete. If you don't have a good inventory of all the software and updates on the server you may never get everything back the way it was."

Benefits

Network Partners' recommendation was to replace the tape-based backup solution with an all-in-one data protection appliance from Unitrends. Data is now copied to the backup appliance's disks at high speed, requiring no server downtime or delays.

"Now we back up our servers several times a day, instead of just every weekend," Simpson said. "Users don't even notice a slowdown as the backups occur, and the network is available at all times."

In addition, the Unitrends appliance automatically takes "hot" bare metal backups of the critical Citrix servers to ensure they can be rebuilt quickly in the event of a failure. After a recent faulty software update left one of the servers in an unusable state, the bare metal feature was used to recover the entire machine in less than an hour.

"When we saw the mess the faulty software patch had made to the system we realized it would take many hours to fix it," Mash said. "We asked the network administrator to load the Unitrends recovery CD, and the system was back online in a fraction of the time it would have taken to troubleshoot the original problem."

Recovering files from the Unitrends appliance only takes a few minutes, and there is no need to load tapes or other media. "We just use Windows Explorer to drag and drop files from the backup appliance to wherever we need them," Simpson said. "It's very fast."

Even recovering an entire virtual server takes just a few clicks in the web-based interface. "Simply select the server you want to recover, select the VMware host you want to restore it to and click a button," Mash said. "Within a few minutes the server will be back online."

One backup appliance protects all of Ward & Uptigrove's VMware and Citrix servers, and replicates data to a remote location as part of their disaster recovery plan. If anything ever happens to the main office building, the remote appliance can be used to recover server images to either the original location or a temporary office space to ensure the busy accounting firm can continue to provide services to its clients.

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