



Backup, Disaster Recovery and Storage in a Single, Integrated Solution

Government Sector Success Story | Jefferson County, Wisconsin



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Solution Highlights

Industry | Government

Protected Platforms

Virtual

- VMware vSphere
- Windows Server 2003, 2008, and 2012
- Linux

Data Protected

- 3 TB and growing

Challenges

- Reduce backup management overhead
- Continuously verify RTO for critical systems can be achieved
- Streamline compliance reporting

Solution

- Unitrends Recovery Series Backup Appliance 823 - Unitrends ReliableDR - Nimble CS240 Storage Array

Benefits

- 95% reduction in RTO verification time - 75% reduction in backup management overhead
- Proof of critical system recovery

Customer Profile

Jefferson County is a county located in southern Wisconsin (U.S.). Its county seat is Jefferson and according to the 2010 census, Jefferson County has a population of 83,686. The county is named after Jefferson County, New York, where some of the original settlers of the county originated. Jefferson County covers a total area of 583 square miles.

Executive Summary

This case study describes how a county government serving over 80,000 residents implemented a joint solution comprised of Unitrends data protection and recovery assurance, and Nimble Storage, to verify and certify RTO/RPO objectives, reduce backup management overhead and combine backup, disaster recovery and storage into one integrated package.

The Challenge

Roland Welsch manages a lean but effective team of four individuals that support all technical operations for Jefferson County, Wisconsin, such as the helpdesk, equipment repair and network administration. The county has several data centers and a heterogeneous environment consisting of servers virtualized with VMware vSphere 5 Enterprise, and physical servers.

Prior to implementing Unitrends Jefferson County had a tape library installed for data backup and recovery. However according to Roland it was not the most efficient system, "I had to touch it in some way every single day to keep it running," he stated. "Either there wouldn't be enough tapes, something would be wrong with the tape changer, it was always something."

Roland also had another challenge, verifying he could meet an RTO of well within 24 hours for 14 critical systems: Email, the domain controller, Citrix, the file server, imaging and GIS. Before the joint solution from Unitrends and Nimble, Roland and team were only able to test bits and pieces every week, which was not sufficient verification that all 14 systems would recover well within 24 hours in order to demonstrate compliance with HIPAA business continuity requirements. As Roland puts it, "Testing recoverability and RTO was a long, arduous process, exacerbated by the fact that we couldn't allocate dedicated resources to the task. We also didn't want to count our data recovery operations as verification of full system recovery, as there's a huge difference between getting data back, and having access to a fully functioning system, application or business service."



It's a huge step forward for us. Never before have we been able to combine backup, DR and storage in one tightly integrated package.

Roland Welsch,
Jefferson County



About Roland Welsch

Roland Welsch has worked in the IT field in various roles including training, networking, backup, infrastructure and security for over 30 years mostly in the County government sector.

The last straw came when they experienced a SAN failure. At this point they had already implemented the Unitrends Recovery Series Backup Appliance, but did not have the ReliableDR component or Nimble Storage yet. As Roland recalls it was a turning point for them, "When the SAN went down, it did take some GIS and imaging services, but luckily we were able to do a few short restores with Unitrends to get things operational. It made me realize that tape was not going to be a viable option to meet my 24 hour RTO, and a near-line storage system with the ability to recover from SAN snapshots was the ideal way to go. I also needed a way to test this on an ongoing basis to ensure it will work."

The Solution

Enter ReliableDR from Unitrends and adaptive flash storage from Nimble with array-based replication. Since Jefferson County had already had success overhauling their backup system with Unitrends, it made sense to go back to them with their disaster recovery needs. "Unitrends had already delivered a 75% reduction in backup management overhead, because I only had to touch the new system a quarter of the time, so it made sense to work with them again, especially given their Nimble integration."

The joint solution was attractive for numerous reasons. First, due to Nimble's advanced replication techniques, ReliableDR is able to conduct SLA testing more frequently, providing even more proof that RTO and RPO will be met in the event of an outage. Second, because Nimble is able to retain snapshots for longer periods of time, Roland is assured expedited recovery as well as rollback to longer term recovery points. And lastly, because ReliableDR automates the SLA testing process, Roland did not have to dedicate any of his already overstretched resources to this under-focused yet vital area. "It was a huge step forward for us. Never before had we been able to combine backup, DR and storage in one tightly integrated package. It's unique and a major time saver; it will help decrease recovery time for organizations of all sizes."

The Results

The Unitrends Recovery Series Backup appliance allowed Roland and his team to reduce backup management overhead by 75%. This was simply because he didn't have to manage it nearly as much on a day-to-day basis. Once ReliableDR and Nimble Storage were added to the mix, the complete, integrated solution of backup, disaster recovery and storage produced even more benefits, primarily towards the ultimate goal of meeting the RTO mandated by their business continuity requirements and HIPAA. ReliableDR also manages failover and failback. Any application or IT service can be rolled back to a Certified Recovery Point at the DR site, or restored to production, at the push of a button.

"Prior to Unitrends and Nimble we needed a 4 month cycle to test all 14 critical applications," Roland advised. "We didn't have the resources or technology to facilitate adequate testing, so we'd test pieces here, pieces there, but never get the full picture of the puzzle."

Today Jefferson County is able to test all 14 systems on a weekly basis marking a 95% reduction in the time it takes to verify core systems will meet their recovery time objective. What's more, Roland has streamlined and enhanced the county's compliance reporting in the process. "I currently provide the auditing firm with copies of our disaster recovery plan. Soon I'll be able to provide them with logs that say we restored entire servers. And that's the type of peace of mind that helps you sleep at night."



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