

ANATOMY OF A DRAAS EVENT

A True Story from Hurricane Irma

Founded in 1968, Safety Products Inc. (SPI) has long been committed to helping companies create safe work environments. They provide quality safety products and services that decrease employee injuries, reduce workers' compensation expenses, insurance costs, and medical bills. SPI produces safety apparel, signs, and safety equipment such as first aid kits and fire extinguishers.

SPI is based in Lakeland Florida, 40 miles east of Tampa, placing them in the direct path of seasonal hurricanes. On May 5th 2017, Dennis Hershey, CTO of SPI, called Unitrends to activate his Disaster Recovery as-a-Service (DRaaS) in anticipation of hurricane Irma disabling his local data center. Irma was forecasted to be the first Category 5 and most intense hurricane to strike the United States since Katrina in 2005, and the first major hurricane to make landfall in Florida since Wilma, also in 2005. Irma had just destroyed much of the Caribbean, and Hershey did not want his company operations to be part of the toll.

“We decided to implement our DR plan with the approach of Hurricane Irma.

The process worked just as advertised.

There is now no reason for us to actively manage our DR process as we have outsourced this to Unitrends.”

**Dennis Hershey, CTO
Safety Products
Lakeland, Florida**

UNITRENDS DRAAS

Prior to May of 2017, SPI was attempting to use an EMC / VMware DR solution requiring SPI to establish a second site DR center. Similar EMC hardware was located in each site with data syncing between them, but they were never able to get it to work. After a year of working with EMC, SPI began to look for a better solution. At the same time, they were using Carbonite for local data backup and recovery, but according to Hershey, “backup was terrible and we could never get it to recover.” SPI was hoping to fulfill the need for both local backup / recovery and DR from the same products. “We are not a large company but data loss to us is really critical and could result in the loss of the entire company,” said Hershey.

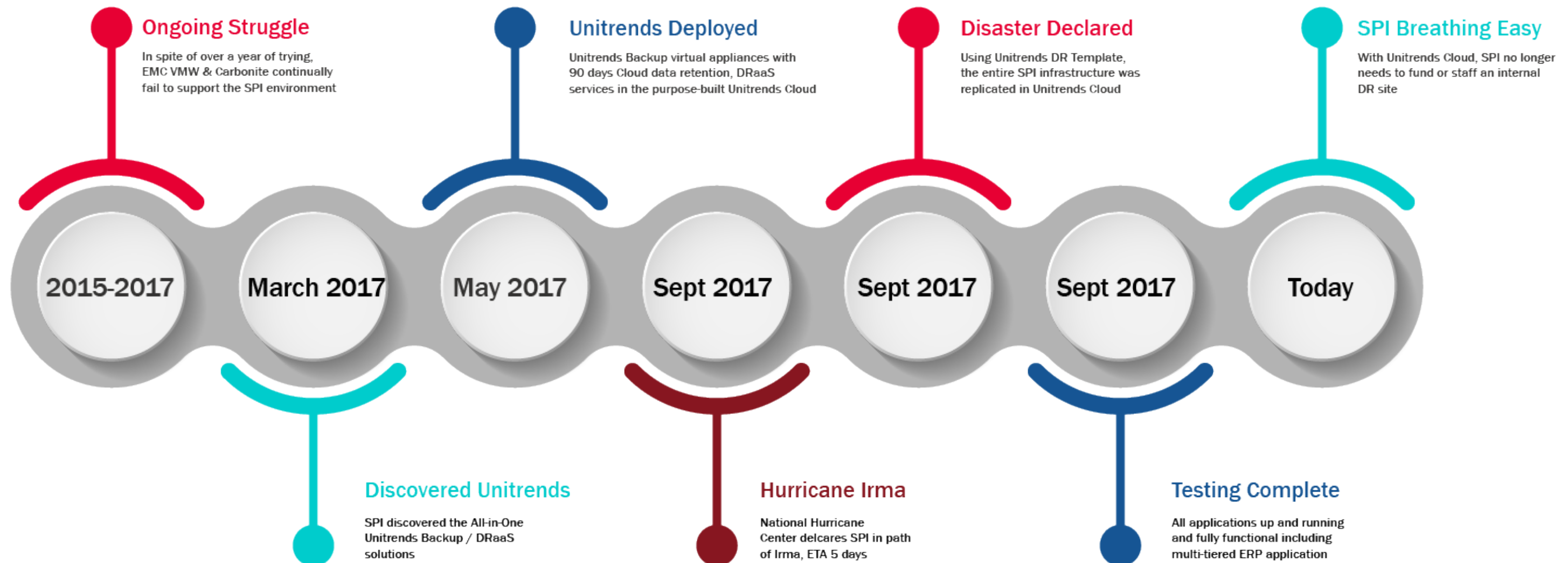
One of Hershey's IT team discovered Unitrends, and after a live demo the Unitrends solution seemed to offer everything SPI was seeking. In March of 2017, SPI purchased a Unitrends Backup / DRaaS solution.

SPI's DR solution included two copies of Unitrends Backup virtual appliances with 90 days of Forever Cloud data retention, plus DRaaS services in the purpose-built Unitrends Cloud. Unitrends Backup virtual appliances provide local backup and recovery capabilities to protect against isolated downtime events such as disk failures, ransomware, or employee error and also replicate backups to Unitrends Cloud. Unitrends Cloud is not a separate storage and recovery cloud, such as AWS or Azure, but rather Unitrends holds the backup data in a warm state so that failovers can happen more quickly. Unitrends DRaaS also includes support for an unlimited number of failovers and 30 days of cloud operation at no extra charge. The entire Unitrends solution was deployed at SPI in May.

PREPPING FOR DISASTER

Just 4 months after installing their new Unitrends DRaaS solution, SPI was faced with a major threat to their operations. In five days hurricane Irma was scheduled for a direct hit on Florida, and Hershey wanted to be prepared. His team called Unitrends Support Engineering, declared a disaster, and "within 30 minutes implementation began." Unitrends Customer Support Engineers stepped the SPI IT team through the process of aligning their networks and testing to ensure their applications were functional and running the latest backups. The entire SPI infrastructure was replicated in Unitrends Cloud. Especially important to SPI was their multi-tiered ERP application, since this is the brain of their operations, so the teams ensured this application was up and running in the cloud. Remote SPI offices have their network rerouted via a secure connection to maintain operations, with all their applications available in the Unitrends Cloud.

TIMELINE OF THE SPI DRAAS EVENT:



DR LESSONS LEARNED

The exercise showed SPI they needed to update their DR plan. The old plan was very much based on the knowledge and skills of particular individuals but SPI learned they needed a scalable plan that accommodated growth and change within their IT department. Their updated DR plan will empower any appropriate team member to follow documented procedures regardless of their individual knowledge or role in the organization. SPI will use Unitrend's DR template as a model for documenting this process. SPI also plans to consolidate their DR infrastructure, as a secondary site is no longer required.

SPI will now depend fully on Unitrends Cloud and no longer needs to fund or staff an internal DR site. Traditionally IT has to dedicate time and budget to crafting, testing and maintaining their own DR services, all when they are heavily overloaded. Now that has changed for SPI. "The Unitrends solution worked as advertised. There is now no reason for us to have to actively manage our DR program anymore. This was one of the first times in our experience that the promises made during the sales cycle were completely upheld in the product," said Hershey. "We are looking to expand our DR capabilities now that we have seen how the process works. We know there are many other capabilities that the Unitrends solution provides and we want to see what else we can add to our DR strategy."

POST SCRIPT: RANSOMWARE RECOVERY

Shortly after the Hurricane Irma DR event, SPI was hit with a Crypto Locker ransomware attack. Using the same Unitrends components that enabled DRaaS, SPI was able to recover in less than 1 hour. The Unitrends Backup software appliances include AI capabilities to detect an active ransomware attack and alert administrators to take action. "We were fully restored in under an hour." said Hershey. "Our previous product would take 20 minutes just to locate the files that required restoration."

"We know that Unitrends is a solution provider, not a backup company"

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Unitrends increases uptime and confidence in a world in which IT professionals must do more with less. Unitrends leverages high-availability hardware and software engineering, cloud economics, enterprise power with consumer-grade design, and customer-obsessed support to natively provide all-in-one enterprise backup and continuity. The result is a "one throat to choke" set of offerings that allow customers to focus on their business rather than backup. Learn more by visiting unitrends.com or follow us on LinkedIn and Twitter @Unitrends.