

CommVault Assures Critical Business Data is Always “In Stock and Ready to Ship” for Design Within Reach

QUICK FACTS

Industry/Solution:

- Retail – Home Furnishings

Platform/File System:

- Microsoft Windows Server 2003 & 2000

Applications:

- Microsoft Exchange email
- Custom Microsoft Based Retail Applications
- Microsoft SQL databases
- Oracle databases

Partner Hardware:

- IBM servers, desktops, and laptops
- HP Thin Clients
- HP MSA 1000 storage area networks (SANs)
- Snap Server network attached storage (NAS)
- MCP iSCSI disk array
- Quantum 1500 Ultrium tape library

Challenges:

- Maintain high availability for critical customer-facing applications
- Automated management of growing Microsoft Exchange email storage
- Fast, reliable backups for growing storage infrastructure in available window of time
- Fast, reliable restores
- Ease of backup management, reduced management burden

Solution:

- CommVault DataMigrator
- CommVault Galaxy Backup & Recovery
- AUX Copy
- Synthetic Full Backup

Benefits:

- Automated, centralized backup minimizes management time, enables fast ROI
- Informative reports for easy backup management
- Reliable backups in available window of time
- Efficient management of Microsoft Exchange email storage
- Fast, easy to do restores

Customer Profile

Furniture retailer Design Within Reach (DWR) provides easy access to well-designed modern furnishings and accessories traditionally found only in designer showrooms. From a common inventory of products, “in stock and ready to ship,” the San Francisco-based company offers the one source for fully licensed classic designs. Customers can shop DWR through the company catalogue, online, and at more than 60 studios across the U.S.

Data Management Environment

DWR’s data center at corporate headquarters in San Francisco has ninety IBM x386 servers primarily running Microsoft Windows 2003, with a few servers running Windows 2000. The company has another small data center and their disaster recovery site at their warehouse in Hebron, Kentucky. There are 145 IBM PC desktops in the corporate office and the Kentucky warehouse, along with IBM laptops for people who travel. In DWR’s 63 retail stores, called studios, 250 HP Thin Clients connect to the order entry system through a terminal server farm with ten IBM x386 servers in a Microsoft Network Load Balance cluster.

Primary storage is on two storage area networks (SANs) in San Francisco. “Our storage needs are not huge,” says Joe Martins, Vice President of Information Technology at DWR, “so we have entry-level SANs — two HP MSA 1000 SANs, each with about two terabytes capacity.”

DWR relies on CommVault DataMigrator to manage storage for the company’s critical Microsoft Exchange email, and CommVault Galaxy for backup of their mission critical retail systems. Both products are built on the same Common Technology Engine (CTE) and are operated from the same user interface. Galaxy backs up all the servers in the data center, and a second Galaxy server backs up the Kentucky data center, managed remotely from San Francisco.

Data Protection is Mission Critical

The IT department at DWR is on the front line with the customer. “We are a little different from most retailers,” explains Martins, “in that we have no cash and carry business. It is all order-and-ship, in the studios, on-line, or on the telephone. Our job in IT is to make sure the customer has the means to make the purchase.”

Information flows from the customer in the studio, on-line or on the telephone to IT and back. “The customer is connected in real time directly to the warehouse,” says Martins. “It is a very immediate, central role for IT. The company’s motto is ‘In stock and ready to ship,’ and it is our job to make sure that works. Real time availability of inventory data is critical. If there is a problem, we need to fix it ASAP, in 15 minutes. CommVault plays a big part in that by delivering an over 99% backup success rate.”

DataMigrator Manages Email: “It’s Simple.”

DWR uses CommVault DataMigrator to manage storage for their Microsoft Exchange email data. Following user-defined rules, DataMigrator automatically migrates Exchange data to a Snap Server network attached storage (NAS) device and eventually to tape. DataMigrator saves resources by shifting storage from expensive primary storage to less expensive tier two and tier three storage. DataMigrator also reduces email management burden on the IT staff. “Users have access to DataMigrator,” explains Martins. “Users can see exactly where the documents they are looking for are located. They can see a DataMigrator icon, click on it, and it takes about 25 seconds to go and get the document and bring it back. Restores are almost always successful, even if the data is on tape. Recently I wanted to see how a CommVault restore was going. I don’t have any DataMigrator training, but I was able to jump in and muddle through... it was easy and intuitive.”

Galaxy Supports Multi-level Backup Strategy

For their key financial data (for example, the order entry database and the order management system), DWR does incremental backups to disk every 15 minutes. Those backups are made to the HP MSA 1000 SAN, and then to tape, using CommVault Aux Copy capability. They also do full backups each night for these core financial applications.

DWR has evolved a very aggressive backup schedule over time. "We were doing nightly full backups of the main file server to the MSA 1000 SAN for any data we thought was semi-significant — anything other than our mission critical applications," says Martins. "But then we decided that was not adequate. We can't afford to lose a whole day's work, and, according to Murphy's Law, if the server goes down it will go down right at the end of the day, just before you back it up. So now we do incremental backups every 60 minutes for those applications, and every 15 minutes for our most critical financial applications."

CommVault Synthetic Full Backup is "A Great Capability"

DWR uses CommVault Synthetic Full Backup to organize and consolidate the incremental backups into full backups. "Synthetic Full Backup is a great capability," says Martins, "and it is very reliable. If we need to do a restore, we just get the last Synthetic Full and maybe one incremental and restore. With Veritas Backup Exec, we needed the last full and all the incrementals since the last full, which could be 18 or 20. With CommVault Synthetic Fulls, we are always up to date within 15 minutes for our most critical data."

Replacing Veritas Backup Exec

Before DWR installed CommVault DataMigrator and Galaxy software, they used Veritas Backup Exec. "We outgrew Backup Exec," says Martins. "Backup Exec was there, so we just kept using it. But it got to a point where we outgrew it. And we never had good support. For example, Backup Exec used to lose track of tape drives. We had to trouble shoot, but we'd find nothing wrong. So we would remove the native hardware drivers and reinstall the Backup Exec drivers, and then it would all run fine. There was no rational explanation for it; it did not make sense."

"It is easy to get in the habit of sticking with something you know. Veritas Backup Exec has been around for a while. You use it on your first job. You use it to back up a couple of servers, and it's fine...until. You use it until you start pulling out your hair and decide it's not worth it."

Choosing CommVault

DWR looked at a number of options before they chose CommVault. "We have a lot of IBM hardware," says Martins, "and at the time we had IBM storage. So we looked at Tivoli, because we thought IBM to IBM made sense. But we are a simple Microsoft environment, and Tivoli is too complex. Or maybe the way they presented it made it seem too complex. We also looked at Veritas Net Backup. It was a possibility, but when we analyzed the support we had gotten in the past, it was not stellar."

When a CommVault sales representative called, Martins was sufficiently impressed to look into it further. He says, "I saw that the technology was built from scratch in recent years for Windows. CommVault has good working relationships with Microsoft and with the hardware vendors; they use the hardware vendors' drivers. We talked to a

couple of CommVault customers in the San Francisco area, including the San Francisco Stock Exchange, and we heard rave reviews."

CommVault Delivers Faster Backups, Better Reports, and Quick ROI for DWR

The backup window for DWR's nightly full backups is 8:00 pm to 6:00 am. "With Veritas, we had problems completing backups," says Martins, "and the problems messed people up. It's a problem if you come in in the morning and you can't open your application because it is still backing up. With CommVault, we fit all the backups in easily in that time."

CommVault reporting has been a big benefit. "I get a Web-based summary of all the backup jobs every morning," says Martins. "It's color-coded. Green is good, so if it's green I don't even look at it. If it's not green, I look at it and do whatever is needed. BackupExec did not have as good reporting as CommVault. Its out-of-the-box reports were not great, and the report writer took too long to get to the information we needed. With Veritas, I got a text-based report, so I had to read it carefully to see what it said. I had a hard time getting to the information I needed. Plus, often it would say something failed, but it had not failed...it may have just missed one file. CommVault's report is much better. I can see what I need to know in a glance; it takes me about two seconds."

The bottom line for DWR is that they got a fast return on investment with CommVault. Martins estimates they save 80% of one full-time staff person. He says, "We've had 20 to 25% growth this year, and as much as 40% in previous years. With that rate of growth, if we had stayed with Backup Exec, I would have to devote one whole person to backup. But with CommVault, backup takes 20% of one person."

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