

CommVault Galaxy "Restore Solution" Saves Time, Effort, and Storage Resources for Law Firm

QUICK FACTS

Industry/Solution:

- Law Firm

Platform/File System:

- Windows 2000, Novell Netware

Network:

- 100 BaseT, Gigabit Ethernet

Application(s):

- Microsoft Exchange, Microsoft SQL Server, Automated Litigation Support

Challenge:

- Reliable restores

Solution:

- CommVault Galaxy Backup & Recovery

Benefits:

- Reliable restores
- Faster restores, saving IT and attorney time
- Reliable Disaster Recovery plan
- Savings in digital tape media

Customer Profile

Howard Rice is a medium-size San Francisco law firm with 150 attorneys (400 employees total). Matt Reynolds, Director of Information Technology, describes the IT mission at Howard Rice as an important part of the Firm's mainstream culture. "Technologically," he says, "we want to be perceived as not only savvy, but also contemporary. Technology is embraced by all of our attorneys and staff. We believe technology can help us improve processes by allowing our attorneys immediate access to information, whether in the office or working remotely. But there always needs to be a business rationale for the technology."

Planning for data protection, disaster recovery, and business continuity is an important focus for the IT team at Howard Rice, and CommVault Galaxy software plays a critical role in that planning. "After September 11, 2001," says Reynolds, "we took a look at our data protection strategy. That process eventually led us to CommVault Galaxy software."

Data Management Environment

The computing environment at Howard Rice includes 36 HP/Compaq servers, running Microsoft Windows 2000 and a moderate number of Netware servers. The HP/Compaq servers, a mix of DL series "pizza box" servers, plus bigger ML series servers, support 350 Compaq PCs and 50 IBM Notebooks. The network is 100 BaseT full duplex to the desktops, and gigabit Ethernet in the server room. Storage consists of a number of file servers and Compaq RAID hardware with a total capacity of about 3.8 terabytes. Backup software is CommVault Galaxy, and backup hardware is a Compaq tape library with two SDLT 320 drives, 26 media slots, and a total native capacity of 5.2 TB.

Backup Routine

Howard Rice uses a backup routine that combines full and incremental backups, determined by the nature of the data. "We

have four different sets of data, four different 'buckets'," explains Reynolds. The different data categories are: (1) MS Exchange message storage; (2) file servers (for example, every attorney has a home directory and a private folder, which are on the file servers); (3) SQL server databases (several mission critical systems leverage SQL databases, including accounting, document management, and relationship management applications); (4) Automated Litigation Support (ALS) Department (as a result of complex litigation, ALS receives from clients a tremendous amount of data in its native format, including scanned images, Outlook PSTs, database files, documents, hard drives, etc.).

"We use a combination of full and incremental backups of those four 'buckets,' on a 7-day per week schedule," says Reynolds. "For the ALS Department, we perform full weekly backups and no incremental backups, whereas for MS Exchange we do full backups once a week with incremental backups in between. The MExchange backup is especially important, since some attorneys may have as many as 20,000 saved messages in their mail boxes. Backing up just these two 'buckets' of data results in an intensive routine backup schedule."

Data Storage Requirements Growing

The growing requirement for storage is a serious concern for law firms. While disk space is relatively inexpensive, data is growing exponentially. "It's the nature of the work," says Reynolds. "We have many documents that need to be available, not just to one attorney, but to several at the same time. We scan large volumes of documents and create PDFs/images and make them available in various online databases to authorized attorneys and staff." In the aftermath of September 11, 2001, disaster recovery also became a more pressing concern. "That's on the minds of law firms, as well as everybody else," says Reynolds. "Disaster recovery and business continuity are a big

part of everybody's IT strategy. That's part of why we made the analysis and scrutiny of our backup capability a priority.

Choosing Galaxy

"Veritas BackupExec is a prevalent product in the legal community," says Reynolds, "and the legal community tends to be conservative, less aggressive about going outside the norm and looking for a different, more effective solution, the way corporate America does. However, over the years we had serious problems using Veritas for restores. So I researched and surveyed what's used in other, non-law-firm environments. Over the course of several months, I kept hearing about CommVault, so I decided to take a closer look." Reynolds went through a detailed review process before selecting Galaxy. Howard Rice did not conduct an in-house test. Instead, in late 2002 they had an opportunity to analyze another firm that had installed CommVault Galaxy. Based on that firm's success, Howard Rice installed Galaxy in early 2003. "I was quite amazed and I am incredibly pleased with CommVault," Reynolds says. "This is CommVault's forte, and they do it very well. Galaxy works as advertised."

Galaxy: A Better Restore Solution

For IT staff and attorneys at Howard Rice, the most important payoff from Galaxy is seen in the unlikely event that files need to be restored. "Every product out there can appear to do a backup and show you a report that says the backup is done, with zero errors. The real test is when you actually need to restore data. Sometimes it turns out that it's NOT really backed up, throwing your entire backup process into question! Actually, we don't think of Galaxy as merely a backup solution. It's really a restore solution."

"For example," says Reynolds. "CommVault has dissected MS Exchange. You can restore a mailbox, or a folder, or a single email message. When a lawyer inadvertently deletes an Outlook folder, he does not want the entire Outlook mailbox restored — he just wants the deleted folder restored in a timely manner. Galaxy can restore exactly what you need. That level of granularity results in simple, accurate and efficient restoration."

The same level of granularity applies to Microsoft Active Directory (a Microsoft common layer that contains names, addresses, and other directory information across the entire MS Windows environment). The ability to restore one component, rather than the whole Active Directory, means huge savings of time and effort," says Reynolds. Single Instance Storage is another valuable feature. Galaxy saves only one copy of an attachment, plus indexes, rather than saving every copy of it in every mailbox, saving a tremendous amount of tape storage.

An unexpected benefit has been significant savings for tape media. "With Galaxy, tape life is much longer," explains Reynolds. "We used to keep tapes for two generations and then have to destroy them. With Galaxy, we don't have to do that. While the Super DLT tape cartridges are more expensive, we know that the tapes are reliable and we can restore from them. Previously, our concern was with restores. We thought the tapes were reliable, but after we'd used them the software would start having problems doing restores. Why? Well that's a mystery. But now we know with confidence that we can restore from tapes using Galaxy's solution."

Return on Investment

In a law firm, time is quite literally money, and the return on investment from CommVault Galaxy has been significant time savings for both IT staff and attorneys. "Let me give you a simple example," says Reynolds. "Suppose an attorney inadvertently deleted several email folders. In order to restore with Veritas, we had to first restore his complete mailbox under a different name. Then we went through the process of exporting the deleted folders as PST files and import them into the attorney's real mailbox. It took hours of IT time to do that. In a similar situation with Galaxy, the attorney simply told us what folders were missing, and we were able to restore them. The process took minutes, and it was totally transparent to the attorney. We saved hours of IT time on routine restores. We also saved valuable attorney time."

Another example involves the use of Blackberries. In one case, an attorney was unaware that IT had failed to remove contact information on the Blackberry from another attorney. When the attorney cradled the Blackberry, it synched up to his Outlook folder, and immediately uploaded the contact information that wasn't his. The attorney knew he had "dirty data" when he suddenly saw 500 strange contacts in his Outlook Contacts folder. "With Galaxy," recalls Reynolds, "we were able to clean it up in a matter of minutes. We just restored the proper data from the previous day's backup. You can't do that with Veritas. The attorney, or his secretary, or someone in IT would have spent hours cleaning up his contact files. So Galaxy saved hours in that one incident."

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