



## Case Study

## EVault InfoStage™ Saves Holiday for Time Warner Cable



Time Warner Cable provides more than 11 million customers in the U.S. with cable television, Internet access and video services. Its Northeast Ohio operating division, based in Akron, provides these services to more than 386,000 of those customers. Behind the scenes, unknown to the subscriber watching television or surfing the Web, sits the division's IT infrastructure that handles several responsibilities including storing business-critical billing, inventory and other technical services information.

On Christmas Eve, Time Warner Cable suffered a significant server crash. The server ran a critical network-monitoring application, which administrators called "their first line of defense" for diagnosing and fixing problems. Staring at the possibility of losing his window into the operations of some 500 devices, administrator Scott Montgomery had to quickly find a solution to get that application and its data up and running. Despite the holiday, Montgomery, and his supervisor, Tim Archer, the data systems network manager, knew they could not "fly blind" when it came to monitoring their environment for another 48 hours.

Two significant problems loomed: The malfunction to the downed Windows NT 4.0 server was such that it could not be quickly rebooted or fixed and there was no other readily available NT server for migrating the data without working on Christmas. With cross-platform restore capability in its recently installed EVault InfoStage™ software, the technicians knew the faster option would be to migrate the data over to a working server running a different operating system.

"Normally, this is not something we would want to try especially on December 24, but we were confident that the EVault software could handle this," recalls Archer.

Valuable time was saved because there were no tapes to declare and have rushed in from an offsite facility. Montgomery started out in the late morning and restored the data from the Windows NT 4.0 server to the Windows XP server in plenty of time to get ready for St. Nick's arrival.

"Without EVault technology to help us restore data from that server, I'm sure I would have been working on Christmas," says Montgomery.

Like many data centers, Time Warner-Northeast Ohio's IT infrastructure evolved into a multi-platform environment, with each server running its own applications. In total, this 800GB environment contains some 500 devices including six servers and one AS/400 mainframe, running several operating systems (Unix, Novell, Windows 2000, Windows XP and Citrix). As is often the situation with heterogeneous environments, individual processes and overall management are required for each particular OS.

### Cross-Platform Chaos

The organization's backup process typified their IT complexity. Each server platform required its own backup software and service pack, and cross-OS communication was poor, making it nearly impossible to provide any kind of reporting information that is required for comprehensive, centralized management. If the time to create and manage the migration of dozens of backup

tapes each day wasn't zapping enough resources, the real killer affecting Time Warner Cable was the inadequate performance, functionality and support of its tape-based backup and restore process. Running Veritas BackupExec to backup its Unix servers could take as long as eight hours. Novell NetWare servers using Computer Associates ARCserve could take two to three hours to back up. Provided that the condition of the data on the media itself was acceptable, recalling tapes from their offsite facility often would take until the next day.

Recognizing the need to improve performance and reduce manpower resources, administrators at Time Warner Cable had to automate the backup and restore process and somehow streamline the backups of the divergent platforms into a single process.

Working with Cerdant, an EVault value-added reseller based in Dublin Ohio, Time Warner Cable spent about six months evaluating a range backup solutions: Some leveraged iSCSI technology, others the vendor-agnostic capability of network-attached storage and some, like EVault, included disk-to-disk backup software.

Time Warner Cable selected the EVault InfoStage online data protection and recovery software solution, which in combination with Cerdant's cost-effective integration, won out over IBM/Tivoli and Legato Systems.

### Redundancy Breeds Availability

The opportunity to replace their tape-based backup process also enabled Time Warner Cable to evaluate its own disaster recovery

preparedness. Montgomery and Archer wanted to implement a more tolerant environment in the more likely event of hardware failure or some kind of human error.

Time Warner Cable turned to Cerdant to integrate the EVault online, disk-to-disk software into a turnkey solution that eliminated any single point of failure. Once EVault InfoStage makes block-level scans across each server for new or modified files since the last back up, it creates a file of "changes." That pool of changed data is compressed down to as much as two percent of the original file size (depending on the application) and encrypted before formatted into a standard OS-independent text file format and sent over the public or private network to a storage array or "vault" located offsite. Instead of making daily backup tapes, Cerdant helped fulfill Time Warner's desire to have a fault-tolerant storage array for the backup target. They installed and configured a 1TB array with RAID5 (drive striping) with dual power, fans and processors.

### Conclusion

Ultimately, EVault InfoStage efficiently automated the primary backup system for Time Warner Cable, and through its UltraRecovery option, was able to provide an additional fault tolerant layer by replicating backup data to an off-site disk-based data vault.

The saving of Christmas Eve also proved to the network technicians at Time Warner Cable that whether they were easily creating data protection policies or restoring across different platforms, having a "lights-out" backup and recovery software provides a very intangible yet very important benefit—peace of mind.

"What's really valuable about this is that you can configure the software and then forget about it," Montgomery says.

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