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Nathan Hensal
Director of IT



Highland Community College

Situation

The once state-of-the-art IT infrastructure at Highland Community College was in need of a refresh and the person in charge of overseeing that task was Nathan Hensal, Director of Information Technology Services for the college. In addition to upgrading server and storage components, Hensal wanted to find one backup solution to add reliability and security to the upgraded environment.

In the past, the college had multiple backup solutions in place to meet their needs and ended up with multiple backup infrastructures. Ultimately, they were using ARCserve to back up file and print servers, vRanger to back up their virtual environment and an assortment of different scripts to cover databases and applications. This required multiple backup servers, multiple targets for disk storage and three tape systems.

“vRanger was not terribly fast and ARCserve’s newer version only supported Windows. We really just wanted one solution to manage everything and consolidate down to one backup platform that fully supported our environment.”

CHALLENGE

Highland Community College needed one backup and disaster recovery solution to tie everything together: one vendor, one point of contact, one server and one backup and disaster recovery plan. The college wanted to leverage a disk-to-disk-to-tape backup strategy that would modernize their backups, eliminate redundancy and ideally have one vendor-supported application.

After purchasing new servers, storage hardware and a new HP auto-loader tape library, the next challenge was to figure out how to copy data from 75 virtualized servers, running on VMware, to a secondary SAN and onto the tape library, each located in different buildings on campus. The plan was to use the SANs to replicate data from the production SAN1 to the SAN2 in another building and then migrate the data from SAN2 over to the HP autoloader.

With the previous backup programs, it was difficult to get information while the backups were running and determine its real-time status.

SOLUTION

After testing and reviewing multiple solutions, including HP’s Data Protector, Highland Community College selected SEP because it would support their entire environment as well as any foreseeable changes in the future.

“Our goal was to modernize and consolidate our IT infrastructure and we felt that SEP was the only product we tested that offered the level of reliability and flexibility for the future that we had envisioned,” explained Hensal.

SEP Software is the premier technology leader providing high performance backup and disaster recovery solutions for professional IT infrastructures of all sizes. SEP delivers seamless solutions with one central interface to easily manage backups for heterogeneous environments.

SEP's software ensures that data security for both virtual and physical environments can be easily and cost-effectively achieved. SEP is the ultimate expression of German engineering and attention to detail. Design and programming originate from SEP offices in Weyarn, near Munich, Germany, where overall performance and reliability are of the utmost concern.

RESULTS

"We backup all of our data on all production systems and key test systems across the college with SEP. We also backup all virtual machines at the VM level, all data volumes, all system volumes and we have prepared our servers for disaster recovery backup as well," Hensal reports.

"Switching to SEP allowed us to consolidate from three backup platforms down to one. After calculating the time our old backup software took and factoring in our data growth, we can confidently say SEP completes our full backups over 25 times faster than our old solution," says Hensal.

"I think SEP sesam is a very capable, well-engineered product. Everything is well thought out and it is straightforward to use. The application is relatively straightforward to run and is modular in its design once you determine the who, what, when, and where."

"I am very satisfied," says Hensal, whose favorite feature of SEP is the ability to monitor real-time job status. "It's really nice to leave SEP running in the background so I can check it and see a large amount of backup detail all on one screen. It's a single pane of glass for looking at all backup status information for both real-time and historical purposes."

"The SEP technical staff was phenomenal. They led us through the process every step of the way. From the beginning, they helped us design whole backup plan, implement it, and then tweak it throughout the implementation to get the best performance possible," Hensal explains. "We were very pleased with the support and the entire SEP staff was extremely competent and well-versed in the product and backup technologies in general. I would recommend SEP to other colleges, universities or anyone for that matter."

ABOUT HIGHLAND COMMUNITY COLLEGE

Highland Community College offers more than 60 programs of applied and transfer degrees, community education and business training. In addition to comprehensive academic programming, Highland provides theatre, art and music opportunities for the community. Highland Community College is accredited by the Higher Learning Commission and is a member of the North Central Association's Academic Quality Improvement Program. Located in Freeport and Elizabeth, Highland is conveniently positioned in the Chicago tri-state region with access to several major metropolitan areas.