



Backup Express

Success Story: Polk County

Polk County Protects Its E-Government Practices with Backup Express

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Scott Horman
Network Engineer
Polk County's IT Department

Organizational Profile

- E-government at Polk County in Des Moines, Iowa
- Includes numerous departments throughout the County

Business Needs

- Develop a new storage strategy that provides manageability, scalability, and optimum resource usage
- Back up almost one terabyte of data
- Centralize storage into a SAN

Environment

- NT 2000 server
- Xiotech Magnitude disk arrays on three Fibre Channel SANs
- Exabyte 430 and two Exabyte EZ17s

Benefits

- Provides scalability, flexibility, and ease of use
- Completes well within the backup window
- Offers "the best support for a large SAN environment"

The Challenge:

Using digital methods, Polk County in Des Moines, Iowa is embracing e-government techniques. For example, key documents are made into digital images while important dealings like paying taxes are easily transformed into electronic transactions. "It's all about the data," explained Scott Horman, Network Engineer at Polk County's IT Department. "Local government functions only if the right data gets to the right department, as fast as possible, at the lowest cost to the taxpayer." Safeguarding this data, Horman added, is of critical importance. "We support the entire County. That means the offices of the Board of Supervisors, County Auditor, County Sheriff, Health Services, Emergency Management, County Attorney, County Treasurer, Public Works, Community and Family Services, Regional Facilities, and other departments throughout the County." This translates into a multiplicity of users, a variety of systems, and hundreds of gigabytes of data that need to be stored or archived on a daily and weekly basis.

Polk County previously relied on a mix of NT servers, which backed up to stand-alone tape drives, using Veritas' Backup Exec. This worked for a while, noted Horman, until continually growing data volumes made this "island," non-networked approach impractical. The IT Staff then searched for a new storage strategy that would offer them manageability, scalability, and optimum resource usage.

The Solution:

With the help of a local integrator, Horman and the staff evaluated alternatives. Based on the recommendations of the integrator, a decision was reached to streamline operations by centralizing their storage into a SAN environment. A SAN would not only provide better disk utilization, but also make the enterprise easier to manage and grow. Implementing a SAN offers better options for disaster recovery as well. Polk County decided to use Backup Express to provide the enterprise scalability and SAN management necessary for their environment.

Selecting Backup Express was a natural decision, according to Horman: "We needed a solution that would provide us with the best support for a large SAN environment. Backup Express proved to be that solution." Backup Express now runs on an NT 2000 server, in conjunction with Xiotech Magnitude disk arrays on three Fibre Channel SANs. Daily traffic on these runs anywhere from 300 gigabytes to just under one terabyte. All of the data is stored on three tape libraries, the largest of which is an Exabyte 430, with 30 slots. The other two are Exabyte EZ17s with seven slots each. As backup media, Polk County uses Mammoth-2 tapes, with 160 gigabytes of native capacity.



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The Benefits:

"We back up database files, Web files, as well as regular office documents like Word and Excel, etc," Horman said. Polk County runs base backups on a nightly basis for each server attached to the SAN. Base backups usually run up to 300 gigabytes. There is an 8-hour backup window. "Currently, because I do have the time window, I prefer to do the base backups every day. But when our data volume grows, naturally we will switch to doing differential backups," he explained.

At the beginning of the week Horman sends the previous week's tapes out to be stored off-site. He stated, "Typically, we rotate our tapes every 30 days, although some jobs are rotated every 60 days." Horman also has a separate schedule for the County's imaged files, which come from the office of the Treasurer. Because these don't change very much, he explains, they are only backed up every 100 or so days. The backup window for the imaged data, usually totaling 500 gigabytes, is scheduled over a weekend.

With data volumes and formats growing, nine Polk County government departments rely on Backup Express to protect their data.

About Backup Express:

Backup Express is an enterprise-wide backup and restore solution designed for UNIX, Windows, and NetWare environments and provides support for the broadest range of technologies and platforms. Backup Express is the only solution that supports any combination of UNIX, Windows, Netware, and NDMP/NAS in a SAN, performs backup of all data directly across the fibre network, dynamically shares all tape drives, and controls this single enterprise environment with a single catalog and easy to use GUI. Backup Express also supports all eight NDMP incrementals.

Backup Express's distributed architecture allows it to back up to any device in the network whether it is running UNIX, Linux, Windows, or NetWare, while maintaining a single central catalog for the entire enterprise. Backup Express can attach tape drives, including large automated libraries, at any server on the enterprise; dynamically allocate drives within a SAN; keep sensitive data off the network; and allow on-line backups of large database servers such as Oracle, SAP, MS Exchange, SQL Server, Sybase, DB2 and Lotus Notes. For more information, call 201-930-8200 or visit www.syncsort.com.