

CommVault Software (Galaxy Backup/Recovery and Data Migrator) and a Hitachi Storage-based SAN Are a Big Hit For Astral Television Networks

QUICK FACTS

Industry/Solution:

- Entertainment

Platform/File System:

- Intel PCs and servers; Microsoft Windows operating system, Linux

Applications:

- Microsoft Exchange, Broadcast Scheduling software

Challenge:

- Complete backups in available time window; upgrade storage architecture from server-attached storage to Storage Area Network (SAN).

Solution:

- CommVault Data Migrator
- CommVault Galaxy Backup and Recovery
- AUX Copy

Benefits:

- Reduced storage management load from 28 individual servers to a single SAN
- Replaced 7 or 8U-high servers with attached storage with 1U-high servers with SAN storage
- Automated management of e-mail storage; automated software upgrades

Customer Profile

From broadcast centers in Montreal, Toronto, and Edmonton, Alberta, Astral Television Networks delivers over 100 channels of programming to cable and DTH companies all over Canada. Based in Toronto, Astral Television Networks is a division of Astral Media, a major force in Canadian media, with extensive operations in TV, radio, and outdoor advertising.

Data Management Environment

Astral Television Networks has a centralized Information Technology department in Toronto. "We purchase, operate, and maintain all IT services not directly related to the broadcast signal," explains IT Director Jay McConnell. "We support all office automation applications including e-mail and the Broadcast Scheduling systems for all 100 channels." To support their network of 28 Intel processor-based servers, Astral TV has implemented a Storage Area Network (SAN). The SAN includes McDATA switches, an IBM LTO2 tape library, a storage management server, and a two-terabyte Hitachi Thunder 9570V™ high-end modular storage system for main storage. They use CommVault Galaxy software to back up all their servers, via the SAN. CommVault and Hitachi Data Systems provided technical support for the SAN implementation.

Two Mission-Critical Applications

McConnell and his team have focused their data protection strategy on the mission-critical applications. "For us, it's e-mail and the Broadcast Scheduling applications," says McConnell. "Have you ever been around when an e-mail server goes down? Then you see how important it is. We have many divisions and many groups, with our legal departments working on a number of different contracts at any given time. All that correspondence is critical and can't be lost. The scheduling application is mission-critical

because, if we can't produce a schedule, the broadcast centers can't operate. We also have to keep records and submit scheduling logs for all the Networks to the CRTC (Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission). The critical applications are e-mail and Broadcast Scheduling, and CommVault protects those applications for us."

Moving to CommVault

CommVault was installed at Astral Television Networks in July, 2003. The previous storage architecture was direct-attached storage on the servers, with backup to stand-alone tape drives attached to the servers. As their data storage capacity grew, Jay McConnell and the IT team knew they needed to upgrade. "First, the cost of having storage on and backup for 28 servers and maintaining and managing all of them was getting very expensive," he recalls. "Second, our backup window was up to 14 hours, and was cutting into our business day. Our servers were growing to seven- or eight-U high because of the storage we added to them. Now, we have one SAN and use one-U high servers. Just eliminating all that direct-attached server storage with the Hitachi platform has paid for the SAN by itself. And backing up from the SAN has cut down our backup window from 14 to only four hours."

Because they are using less than the two-TB capacity of their Thunder 9570V storage system, Astral is able to do full backups every night, five days a week. They use the Galaxy Aux Copy functionality to make a second tape. They keep one tape, and send the second tape to an off-site archive. They have a 10-day tape rotation, and pull an end-of-month tape and an end-of-year tape and archive those.

Data Migrator Is "A Big Reason to Choose CommVault"

"Because we are a media company, we exchange lots of images on our e-mail," explains McConnell. "For example, we exchange images used on Web sites, or sales people send images to customers to promote television shows and movies. This becomes a big problem for our Microsoft Exchange e-mail servers. E-mail mailboxes get very large when they have a lot of images. For example, we have one user with 3.5 gigabytes in his mailbox. We can't monitor people all the time. Periodically we have 'mailbox cleaning days,' but that does not really work. The solution is CommVault Data Migrator. With Data Migrator, we can set it up so that any message that has not been touched in six months is automatically migrated off the user's mailbox and onto the SAN. Then, if it is not touched for another four months, it is migrated off to tape. The user sees a tag on the message and knows that it has been moved or migrated out of Outlook, if it is tagged it has been moved to the SAN or on to tape. If it is on the SAN, it is restored in seconds. If it is on tape, it will take a couple of minutes. It's all automated.

"This is a big deal for the IT manager. The size of Exchange databases just keeps growing and growing... and this is a great solution. Data Migrator delivers great benefits for the IT manager - they no longer have to worry about cleaning up files all the time - and users have nothing to complain about, since they can still get any message back very quickly, and they don't have to worry about cleaning out their mailboxes. Data Migrator was one of the big reasons for us to choose CommVault software."

Choosing CommVault

When they evaluated potential new backup solutions, McConnell was impressed with the capabilities of CommVault software. "CommVault was a young company, with new products, and they had features others did not have," he says. "Other companies were not addressing the migration problem. When you get into this tier of backup requirements, there are not many choices. What sold us on CommVault was DataMigrator, the migration tool, and who was choosing CommVault software components in Canada. We were very impressed with their customer list."

Installation and Joint Support by CommVault and Hitachi Data Systems Get Good Ratings

Because they were not just swapping in a new backup software package, but were installing a whole new storage architecture, McConnell was not surprised that they had some problems at the beginning. "Overall, the installation went well," he recalls. "Whenever we had a problem, the CommVault field engineer showed up right away. Whenever we need him, we call, and he comes right over. So I am very happy with CommVault support. And Hitachi Data Systems and CommVault are working together on customer support. Hitachi Data Systems service and support have also been very good."

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