

BCBGMAXAZRIA

BCBGMAXAZRIAGROUP Fashions a Modern Style of Data Protection to Safeguard Vital Designs & Photos Using CommVault Simpana Software

QUICK FACTS

Industry/Solution:

- Fashion

Platform/File System:

- Microsoft Windows Server 2003

Applications:

- Microsoft Exchange Server 2003
- Microsoft Active Directory
- SQL Server 2003
- Gerber Technology AccuMark

Partner Hardware:

- BlueArc NAS

Challenges:

- Storage requirements doubled over the past year as support for nearly 2,000 users mushroomed as data was consolidated on BlueArc NAS amid increased retention of large, design and photography files.
- Ongoing struggles with reliability and performance plagued its previous EMC Networker data protection platform; could not successfully complete Exchange backups.
- Legacy technical support was inadequate and provided little guidance for future problem solving.
- Needed to find a way to reduce tape use and expedite recoveries while increasing data retention to keep full backups on disk for 18 days.
- Wanted to leverage NDMP backup and recovery to safeguard storage-intensive data residing on BlueArc NAS.

Customer Profile

BCBGMAXAZRIAGROUP (BCBG) represents the lifetime vision of Max Azria, a critically acclaimed fashion designer and founder of the global fashion house that encompasses more than 22 brands. The company is named for the French phrase “bon chic, bon genre,” which is Parisian slang for “good style, good attitude.”

Founded in 1989, Los Angeles-based BCBG has redefined the designer category by offering innovative, high-quality clothing at contemporary price points. In doing so, Max Azria, company founder, designer, chairman and chief executive officer, has made sizable strides in building a \$1 billion, global fashion empire. Along the way, he has attracted a loyal following of Hollywood’s top celebrities, including Kate Winslet, Rachel Bilson and Kate Bosworth, who have worn his label for red-carpet events.

According to Ron Gonzales, system administrator for BCBG, the company also has transformed its data management infrastructure while improving protection of data-intensive designs and photography by replacing its legacy backup and recovery platform with CommVault® Simpana® software. As a result, BCBG has fortified its data protection while more effectively optimizing storage to keep pace with rapid growth. “I wear many different hats, so it’s

really important to have reliable data backups and restores,” he explains. “By switching to CommVault Simpana software, we’ve been able to easily accommodate continuous spikes in data storage while knowing we can recover anything should the need arise. I no longer worry if someone asks for something as I have total confidence it will be there.”

Data Management Environment

A team of approximately 80 people support both retail and corporate IT efforts for BCBG. On the corporate side, Gonzales is half of a two-person team responsible for ensuring the integrity of all data residing on 70 file servers running mostly Microsoft Windows Server 2003 and 20 SQL Server 2003 databases that support a variety of corporate, financial, design and marketing applications. Additionally, the backup and recovery team oversees the company’s Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 platform along with Active Directory and SharePoint.

BCBG’s storage requirements doubled over the past year as support for nearly 2,000 users accelerated along with the amount of data they consumed regularly. For instance, the marketing team alone migrated roughly 7 TBs of data from LaCie external hard drives onto the company’s BlueArc unified network-attached storage system. “We recently added another 32 TBs of raw storage to our BlueArc NAS, which now has 64 TBs of total

QUICK FACTS (continued)

Solution:

- CommVault Simpana software Backup & Recovery

Benefits:

- CommVault's Simpana software streamlines backups encompassing 52 TBs of business-critical data residing on dedupe appliance and BlueArc NAS. Full tape-based backups have been reduced from six days to eight hours.
- CommVault's policy automation and reporting capabilities enable BCBG to protect twice as much data with the same personnel.
- Administrative personnel time has been reduced from six hours to less than an hour each day; the team no longer has to monitor backups 24/7.
- CommVault's outstanding tech support quickly solves problems and provides guidance so fewer follow-up calls are required.
- Simpana software's singular platform offers additional capabilities, such as archive, content indexing, search and workstation backup and recovery to support growing requirements.

This customer received certain considerations for their participation in this case study.

capacity," notes Gonzales. "We hope this enables us to keep up with demand, which is a challenge considering our photographer continues to add another terabyte of storage each month."

In addition to accommodating rapid growth, BCBG has expanded the scope of its data protection considerably, especially since the information residing on the external hard drives wasn't backed up previously. "We had to change the way people think about their data so we could redefine our backup and recovery processes," adds Gonzales. "In doing so, our personnel began relying on us heavily to ensure the integrity of really large, graphics-intensive files."

The team also is responsible for protecting a Gerber Technology AccuMark platform, the industry's benchmark for pattern design, grading and marker making. Data generated from this business-critical system also resides on the BlueArc NAS. The arduous process of dealing with BCBG's continuous explosion of data has been a constant struggle for the dedicated backup team. "We're too busy putting out fires to worry about data protection," says Gonzales. "For that reason, we had to find a better approach to meet our needs now and in the future. With CommVault Simpana software, we have a stable, easy-to-use solution that will grow right along with us."

Seeking Trend-Setting Data Management

For years, BCBG struggled with reliability and performance problems that plagued its EMC Networker data protection platform. The resource-constrained team was forced to deal with ongoing backup failures and laborious, time-consuming tape-based restores, which were exacerbated by

inadequate customer service. "We experienced a lot of problems over the years and calling EMC's customer service did little to relieve our aggravation," comments Gonzales. "Customer service would just resolve the issue without explaining how they fixed it, which certainly didn't help us if we had a reoccurrence. We had to call way too often, even for basic problem-ticket resolution."

Additionally, the team couldn't back up its Microsoft Exchange environment successfully, which posed an unacceptable risk. "Microsoft Exchange backups just didn't work," recalls Gonzales. "Then we had a server go down and it couldn't be restored but we also couldn't get a good explanation why. That's when we decided to move on." By the time, BCBG began seeking an alternative data protection solution, the small team was spending up to six hours a day trying to resolve a continuous spate of data protection issues. For that reason, full tape-based backups of 16 TBs took far too long, often running into Monday afternoon before completion. Tape-based restores also became more painful, sometimes taking a day or more, especially if the tape needed to be retrieved from offsite storage.

In seeking a more reliable, modern data management platform, BCBG looked at Symantec NetBackup and CommVault Simpana software. In particular, CommVault's intuitive, graphical user interface and scalable platform was most appealing. "With Simpana software, everything was up front and easy to understand," notes Gonzales. "We also liked CommVault's reporting capabilities and policy automation, which we hoped would reduce our administrative time."

As a result, BCBG migrated its ever-increasing requirements to CommVault while also implementing a deduplication appliance to facilitate disk-based backups and restores.

During the implementation, the team was impressed by CommVault's technical support, which was a stark contrast from their previous experience. "There is no comparison," says Gonzales. "CommVault's tech support is outstanding and we particularly appreciate how they explain everything so we can do it ourselves next time." With initial guidance from CommVault, BCBG embraced its new style of data protection, including a move to disk-based backups to reduce tape use and expedite recoveries. They also wanted to increase data retention by keeping 20 TBs of full backups comprising Windows, Exchange and SQL data on disk for 18 days.

Over time, however, the team began experiencing challenges when moving deduplicated data to tape. "We started filling up the dedupe appliance with Windows server data as well as our Exchange and SQL databases," notes Gonzales. "The rehydration process when offloading to an older LTO-2 tape library took too long and caused concerns that we'd run out of room on the appliance." To free resources, the team decided to remove the deduplication appliance from the equation and back up the BlueArc NAS directly to tape using Network Data Management Protocol (NDMP). Fortunately, CommVault Simpana

software offered full NDMP support, which prompted BCBG to upgrade to the latest software release.

Adding NDMP Support to BCBG's Data Protection Line

With Simpana software, CommVault offered BCBG additional options for NAS NDMP backup and recovery while enabling centralization and automation of backup and restore operations on its BlueArc and legacy deduplication platform. "NDMP backup was very important to us, especially since we keep massive design and photography files on the BlueArc system," explains Gonzales. "We really liked how easily we could set up different policies for managing large photo files and assorted data stored on our NAS platform."

BCBG worked with CommVault's tech support to fine-tune NDMP backups to an upgraded LTO-4 tape library while reducing the time and effort involved. "Backing up 32 TBs of BlueArc data to tape works great and takes so much less time," says Gonzales. "For instance, full backups used to run all weekend and then it took another four days to rehydrate and write data to tape. Now, we can perform the entire backup to tape in less than eight hours and without hogging any resources." BCBG also takes advantage of Simpana software to safeguard another 20 TBs of data that resides on the dedupe appliance, which also is backed up to tape.

When it comes to reducing administrative overhead, Gonzales applauds CommVault's policy automation and

reporting capabilities, which have enabled the team to backup twice as much data as before without adding personnel. "It used to take up to six hours a day to oversee and troubleshoot backups," Gonzales remembers. "Now, it takes less than an hour to review reports and make any adjustments throughout the day. We just set policies and watch it work."

Previously, Gonzales used to regularly log into the backup system from home to monitor progress and deal with issues. "I no longer have to monitor backups 24/7," he says. "Instead I just review reports on my Blackberry and see that all backups are hitting their marks as expected." Restores also have been streamlined and require fewer tech support calls. "We've done quite a few Exchange restores with fantastic results," Gonzales adds. "Typically, a recovery takes less than 10 minutes and we've never run into a restore that didn't happen. When someone asks for something, it's always there, which gives us total confidence in our data protection plan."

Accessorizing with Archive and Workstation Backup

With Simpana software, Gonzales has been able to better manage aggressive data growth while also taking advantage of reduced administrative overhead to focus on more strategic technology initiatives. In the future, these efforts could include increased protection for executive laptops and desktops. To that end, BCBG is investigating CommVault's

workstation backup and recovery solution, which is designed to simplify and protect data stored on individual laptops and workstations.

The remote installation of a simple media agent on the laptops will enable BCBG to perform block-level, incremental back ups without end-user or IT involvement. When it comes to restores, CommVault's workstation data protection supports self-service, file-level recovery for simple, fast and efficient restores. Additionally, this capability can be easily integrated with BCBG's storage policy to create archive copies for long-term retention and eDiscovery.

To date, Gonzales has managed eDiscovery requests relying on Microsoft's Exchange Mailbox Merge Program (Exmerge.exe), but he also sees merit for deploying an archive solution to assist with eDiscovery and retention requirements. "Our photos would be perfect to archive, which would really help storage optimization," says Gonzales. "Also, the addition of CommVault's content indexing feature could be valuable for facilitating information discovery. With CommVault Simpana software, we can take advantage of one data management platform to perform different functionalities, all of which are backed by great support experts who can help us with any tech topic that comes up."



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