

Galaxy Performance Plus CommVault Support Spell Winner for Managed Storage International (MSI)

QUICK FACTS

Industry/Solution:

- High Technology

Platform/File System:

- Windows and UNIX

Application(s):

- Backup, restore, disaster recovery

Challenge:

- Daily remote backups over the Internet

Solution:

- CommVault Galaxy Backup & Recovery
- Synthetic Full Backup

Benefits:

- Reliable backups and restores
- Fast recovery from interrupted backups
- Efficient backups using Synthetic Full backups

Customer Profile

ManagedStorage International (MSI) is a data storage service provider with headquarters in Broomfield, Colorado, and operations in the United States, Japan, the United Kingdom, and France. MSI provides backup, restore, and disaster recovery services for over 650 client companies. The firm offers three types of data protection service: private colocation service, in which MSI installs backup servers and tape libraries on the customer's site and manages the entire backup process; public data center service, in which MSI provides backup infrastructure and management for the tenants of commercial public data centers; and remote backup service, in which customers back up their systems remotely, over the Internet or private broadband connections, to one of 37 MSI storage infrastructures. CommVault Galaxy is the primary storage management software for MSI's remote backup business, which was launched in 2002. "At the same time," says Engineering Manager Molly Crandall, "we are becoming more and more CommVault-centric in all our business areas, including public data center services and, most recently, private colocation services."

Data Management Environment

Reflecting their customers' variety of computing systems, MSI operates in a range of computing environments, including Windows, supported by Windows-based CommServers on Dell hardware platforms, and UNIX, supported by Solaris media agents on Sun servers. Backup tape libraries are primarily StorageTek units equipped with DLTtape, Super DLTtape, and LTO tape drives.

Galaxy Supports New Service Offerings

CommVault was first installed at MSI to support their remote backup service, which was rolled out in August, 2002. "Remote backup was a new service for us," says Crandall, "and we brought CommVault in to support it because we wanted two important

capabilities that CommVault offered: Checkpoint Restart and Synthetic Full backups."

Checkpoint Restart Saves Time

Checkpoint Restart (CPR) is a function that kicks in when a backup is interrupted due, for example, to a network failure or a server failure. "Without CPR," explains Crandall, "when the failure is fixed you may have to go back and start the backup all over again, or you may have to roll back a large portion of the backup. With CPR, we only have to roll back a few megabytes and we can restart the backup. If you're backing up 50 or 100 gigabytes, that saves a lot of time. We know this is especially important for remote backup customers. Most are on VPNs, and there are network hiccups all the time."

Synthetic Full Backups Are Critical

The second key functionality offered by CommVault was Synthetic Full backup. "Our average remote customer is backing up 25-100 gigabytes," says Crandall. "These are pretty big backups, and that's where Synthetic Fulls are so important. With Synthetic Fulls, you do a full backup once, then 'incrementals forever.' The CommVault software automatically merges the incrementals into the full backup, so you always have a full backup, but you only back up the files that have changed since your previous daily backup. The industry rule of thumb is that only 5-10% of files change day-to-day, so for a 100 gigabyte database you only need to move 5 or 10 gigabytes to do the daily incremental backup."

Another winning feature for Galaxy was the ability to build Synthetic Full backups using mixed media types. This allows MSI to do daily incremental backups to disk, which is faster than doing them to tape, and then merge the incrementals on disk right onto the Synthetic Full backup, which is on tape. "This is a capability that we asked CommVault to provide for us, and they did it," says Crandall.

“Great company to work with”

“Besides the features we wanted, the other big reason we went with Galaxy is CommVault’s willingness to work with their customers. CommVault is a great company to work with in that respect,” continues Crandall. “They take our requests and build them into their next release. Every release that has come out since we’ve been with CommVault has included things we requested. And they will do a patch in less than 24 hours for something that’s critical. We work with their people in New Jersey, and they have made trips out here to work with us, and there is a local service engineer. They are all very good.”

While MSI only started using CommVault software in 2002, they were well aware of the company and its products. “The backup and data storage industry is pretty small,” says Crandall, “so we were aware of CommVault. People in our company have business relationships with people at CommVault that go back many years. We were aware that CommVault was a fast growing, successful company, and we were aware of the functionality they were delivering. So when we were looking for new functionality for the new remote backup offering, we looked at CommVault.”

Galaxy Installed at Nine Sites

MSI has installed Galaxy at nine sites, including public data centers in Colorado, California, Virginia, the UK, and France. “The installations have all gone fine,” says Crandall. “We do the installations ourselves. We have the expertise, and the installation process is very straightforward. We have also done beta-site testing for three Galaxy releases, 4.1, 4.2, and 5.0.”

MSI has also installed Galaxy in their development lab and in their own IT department. “One of the key points we make with customers when we talk about CommVault software is that we use CommVault to back up all of our own data, in our own IT operations,” says Crandall. “We trust CommVault, and we trust it enough to use it to do our own backups. That brings up another major reason we went with CommVault. We use CommVault in our IT department to back up our Exchange servers, because the way they handle backup of Microsoft Exchange servers is better than any other software. CommVault offers great functionality in Exchange backup, including mailbox-level restores. That was another important reason to go with CommVault.”

CommVault Delivers Competitive Advantage

MSI is in a highly competitive business, a business in which service providers must deliver clear-cut financial returns, along with bullet-proof reliability. For MSI, CommVault provides major benefits in both economy and reliability.

“Technically sophisticated companies use MSI to manage their backups because we can do it cheaper,” says Crandall. “The rule of thumb is 30% cheaper. Since 9-11, and even before that, companies are much more aware of the importance of disaster recovery planning and business continuity. They may feel that they do not have the expertise to manage their disaster recover program at the level they feel they need, and they may not want to make the ongoing investment in people and systems to keep at that level. A lot of companies feel that, if they are going to invest in IT personnel, they want to

dedicate those people to things like product development and customer service, rather than system maintenance. Companies don’t want to have well-paid IT managers spending several hours a day on backups. So they turn to us. We have the expertise and the commitment, because this is the core of our business. The cost model we’ve been able to work out with CommVault allows us to offer our service at a lower price than our competitors, whose services are based on competing products.”

Reliability Builds Trust

CommVault also delivers the reliability MSI demands. “In a lot of ways,” says Crandall, “our customer’s data is more critical to us than it is to the customer. For them, it’s data, and some data may be more important than other data. For us, all the data is important. The customers trust us to protect their data. So, as far as we’re concerned, it’s all critical.”

For MSI, the potential costs of lost data are well understood. “If we can’t do a restore, or if a backup fails,” says Crandall, “our Service Level Agreements require us to make a refund to the customer. So we can put a very precise figure on the potential cost of a failed backup. We’ve had server failures, and we’ve been able to go to CommVault and restore. It does the job, so that in most cases our customers weren’t even aware of it. We trust CommVault backup and restore.”

Future Plans for More CommVault Software

“We will continue to phase CommVault into other aspects our business,” says Crandall. “Currently, we are using Galaxy, and we may roll out other CommVault products, including DataMigrator.”

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