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Bill Davis
Manager of Enterprise Systems



Tax Analysts

Situation

Tax Analysts supply critical publications containing tax news and analysis to tax professionals in every industry around the world. Their daily publications are vital to the Company’s relationship with their customers and the global tax community. When Tax Analysts’ backup software failed to create successful restores of data and began running over its allotted backup window, infringing on their ability to meet their nightly publication deadlines, Tax Analyst’s Manager of Enterprise Systems Department, Bill Davis, decided it was time to look for a new backup solution.

CHALLENGE

Tax Analysts’ then current, backup software was requiring longer and longer backup windows, which began to surpass the weekend time slot they had allotted to perform full weekly backups and, more importantly, the software was not reporting accurate restore data. “The biggest challenge we faced was, while attempting restores, we would go into the backup logs and there would be a success message; however, when we went to restore the data from tape, our attempts to open up the restored files failed because either the data would be corrupt or there would be nothing there. In those instances, when there was either corrupt or non-existent data on ‘successful restores,’ we would get the software’s tech support involved to determine where the problem lies and the support process was frustrating, very, very long and frequently we did not end up with a resolution that was satisfactory to us,” reported Davis.

Another significant hurdle was Tax Analysts’ transition from Netware to Linux and the support their backup software offered. “We had particular problems using the Linux backup agents that we had paid for to perform successful restores. We were told by support that the restore of Linux and UNIX data on remote mount points was not a supported option and that was something they were working to fix; however, I was never given a definite date for when the features would be made available, at which point, my comment was this product is useless if it does not support remote mount points, because except for the SYS Volume, all mount points are remote on OES and Linux Servers. At that point, I started looking for a new and better solution,” explained Davis.

ENVIRONMENT

Tax Analysts' network is comprised of around 50 servers, half of which are currently virtual with the remainder being virtualized over the next year. Their servers are a mix of Windows running 2000, 2003 and 2008; Linux with OES SLES 10 and 11. Tax Analysts backs up their data to two tape libraries: a Dell Powervault PV124T, a single drive dual magazine LTO5 loader and enclosure that holds 16 LTO5 tapes; and a Dell PV114X dual drive, also with LTO5 tapes. Company policy requires that certain data be segmented and written on completely separate tapes. Their dual tape library setup enables the Enterprise Systems Department to segment specific data onto one of the two tape sets and the remainder can go out to the other LTO5 tape library.

SOLUTION

Searching for a new backup solution can be a time-consuming and arduous task, testing all of the various products available on the market. "My criteria were (1) can I get a successful restore and (2) can I successfully restore to the systems I am backing up from. My experience obtaining successful restores was about 50 percent of the time, even when I received a success message. Also, I couldn't directly restore to the systems that I was backing up. I had to back up my Linux servers onto tape and in order to restore them, I had to do so on a separate Linux Box or Windows machine and then transfer the data. I looked at two solutions that were Novell Platinum Partners and were recommended by the vendor we were working with at the time. The first seemed to be a good solution, but their pricing was based on the number of TB of data being backed up and, after their engineers looked at our environment, their cost was about ten times the cost of SEP. I was shocked when I was quoted literally tens of thousands of dollars per year to back up and manage 2-5 TB of data per month. I couldn't even begin to submit that budget, much less consider it. The second solution we looked at was SEP and we found that they offered similar features, if not more, at a tenth of the cost. It was really a no brainer," said Davis. Tax Analysts chose SEP sesam as their backup solution because it supported their environment, contained all of the features Davis was searching to obtain and came in at a reasonable budget.

RESULTS

"My initial experience with SEP was easy and consistent. After seeing it at Novell BrainShare, I downloaded and installed a trial of SEP sesam. It started right up the first time and I was able to set it up and configure it myself. I had a couple very minor issues the first time I ran a backup, but when I opened up the log files and looked at the error message, exactly what I needed to change or adjust was laid out very clearly, in very plain English. I made the necessary adjustments and the backups were up and running," stated Davis.

The logo for Tax Analysts, featuring the word "taxanalysts" in a bold, sans-serif font. The "tax" portion is in red and the "analysts" portion is in blue. A registered trademark symbol (®) is located at the top right of the "s" in "analysts".

**RESULTS
(Cont'd.)**

"From the time I initially downloaded the software until the time I had it up and running and performing successful backups was about 45 minutes. In fact, I actually called tech support and told them I thought I had done something wrong and that this can't be all there is to it. Someone from SEP remoted into my machines, spent about 5 or 10 minutes reviewing what I had done, looked at the logs, told me that everything was working and that I had a backup of my system in place and scheduled, ready to go. I performed a few dozen restores that week, verified that the backups were working and every test I tried worked. I am now 100% able to restore directly to and from my Linux systems with SEP sesam. After my tests on my Windows servers yielded the same results, I started using SEP and phased out my two previous solutions" recalled Davis.

Tax Analysts' weekend full backup window was previously running between 30 to 50 hours to complete, much longer than was acceptable. Currently, with SEP sesam their full backup window has decreased to a total of 4 hours. "For a six month comparison to where I was before I started using SEP to where I am now, I am backing up at least 150% more data in somewhere between 8% to 12% of the time. Due to our recent move to virtualize more systems, we have been running both file and image-level backups, as well as VMware host backups. We also have a machine that can accumulate around 2.4 million files that have changed per week and even when we include this machine in the weekend full backups, SEP sesam keeps the backup window to just 4½ hours. SEP sesam has run great," Davis told SEP.

"When I have encountered problems while running SEP sesam, I can go back and look at the error logs or protocols, and there is an error message spelled out in plain English explaining what the problem is and how to correct it. On the very few occasions where that has not been the case, I have been able to open up a ticket with SEP support and get a quick resolution. I have never had to go through a long drawn out process of opening tickets and escalating from a level 1 to a level 2 engineer. The SEP support staff has always been very good, very knowledgeable, and able to overcome any hurdles that I have encountered."

Davis plans to continue working with SEP as Tax Analysts continue their virtualization and begin moving their backups to a more disk-based, offsite system. "I have run SEP sesam for a couple of years now and when I see a success message from a restore, that message has been true 100% of the time. When SEP sesam says something is successful, I can bank on it being there. I am happy to tell people about my experience with SEP and do not even consider looking at other solutions when I get calls about switching."

SEP Software Corp. is the premier technology leader providing standardized and high performance backup and disaster recovery solutions for professional IT environments of all sizes. Its flagship product, SEP sesam, delivers seamless solutions to corporations' backup requirements.

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

ABOUT TAX ANALYSTS

Founded in 1970, Tax Analysts is a tax advocacy and publishing nonprofit organization and is a leading provider of tax news and analysis for the global community. More than 150,000 tax professionals in law and accounting firms, corporations, and government agencies rely on Tax Analysts' in-depth content each day. Tax Analysts has the industry's largest tax-dedicated correspondent staff, with more than 250 domestic and international correspondents. For more information, visit <http://www.taxanalysts.com>

ABOUT SEP SOFTWARE CORP.

SEP has been delivering the widest range of backup products for enterprise level customers since 1996. With thousands of installations worldwide, SEP has developed the fastest and most reliable data-backup solution available today. SEP sesam is ideal for businesses of all sizes and has proven its value for thousands of organizations across the globe. From banking to education to healthcare, SEP sesam delivers unsurpassed performance. US and Canadian Governments, as well as many other governments around the world and thousands of customers spanning six continents, rely on SEP sesam to attain their data protection strategies. For more information, visit www.sepusa.com