

Ireland's Top Department Store Smartens up its Image with Acronis®



Reducing Recovery Time

Founded in 1849, and now part of the Wittington Investment Group, Brown Thomas is one of Ireland's premier lifestyle and fashion stores. It has branches in Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Galway, Blanchardstown and Dundrum – each offering a range of fine jewelry, designer brands, beauty products and children's ware.

Joe Rylands, group IT director at Brown Thomas, was becoming concerned about the retailer's server protection strategy. Growing amounts of data meant that server backups were increasingly taking much longer – this was particularly worrying as the retailer's existing solutions required servers to be taken offline in order to create a full backup. If data volumes continued to grow, Rylands knew that soon it would be almost impossible for the IT team to complete its daily server backups outside the retailer's working hours.

However, the problem was compounded because in the event of server failure it could take around 11 hours to bring a new machine online. This meant it was almost certain that one, if not two, days of normal operations could be lost. Rylands notes that his team faced a similar set of issues at a PC and laptop level. *“And to make things worse, we weren't at all confident that our existing solutions could provide us with sufficiently reliable data recovery capabilities even after we'd invested the time reinstalling the software and configuring the settings.”*

Disk Imaging: The Perfect Fit

The retailer's IT team were concerned about the effectiveness of its existing backup applications, and wanted to find a single vendor that could offer a single solution for servers, workstations and laptops. After carrying out a full evaluation of the data backup and recovery market, Rylands decided that Acronis' disk imaging technology would be the best fit for his needs. This was because Acronis could meet his requirement for a single vendor disaster recovery solution across all hardware formats. In addition, unlike many backup and recovery solutions on the market today, Acronis' software doesn't just back up data, but also saves all installed programmes and preferences together with each machine's uniquely configured system settings.

“Although important in workstation and laptop environments, this function was absolutely critical for our servers as the majority of time spent bringing them back online is dedicated to reconfiguration and software reinstallation,” explains Rylands. Having tested the software, Rylands took the decision to invest in Acronis® True Image Echo™ Server licences. The software would be used to backup and protect the 'tier one' servers, which controlled everything from Point of Sale (POS) systems through to merchandising and HR applications. He also purchased Acronis® True Image Echo™ Workstation licences for key PCs and laptops.

Organisation:

Brown Thomas

Sector:

Retail

Key Challenges:

- Create a centralised, single vendor backup and recovery solution for servers, PCs and laptops
- Reduce backup and recovery time
- Develop bespoke disaster recovery solution for the retailer's Point of Sale (POS) systems
- Cut costs associated with server rebuilds – both in terms of lost business and outsourced IT contractor fees

Environment:

- 300 PCs and laptops running on various Windows® platforms
- 60 Dell servers running on Windows® Server

Solution:

- Acronis® True Image Echo™ Server
- Acronis® True Image Echo™ Workstation

Business Benefits:

- Time to backup a full server reduced from 1.5 hours to 15 minutes in some cases
- A server can be reconfigured in under one hour, previously it took approximately 11 hours
- Greater confidence in data recoverability in the event of a server, PC or laptop failure
- Server backup images easily transferable to remote datacentre via a secure network for increased resilience
- Time taken to rebuild a till cut from two hours to five minutes
- Deployment speed 30 times quicker than a manual build

Business Continuity Becomes a Reality

Acronis' software provides Brown Thomas a greater degree of centralised control. Backup policies can be set remotely and the images transferred quickly and inexpensively to the retailer's datacentre via a secure private network, where they can either be downloaded or stored on dedicated servers. The retailer has, therefore, been able to add a second, previously unattainable, level of robustness – moving it away from reactive disaster recovery to a more proactive business continuity solution. This means that, if a server fails today at a Brown Thomas store, the IT team can upload the most up-to-date Acronis disk image on to a standby server at the retailer's datacentre – and all the related applications for that store can be run remotely. A replacement server can then be configured either at the store or at the datacentre and then delivered to the relevant location – thereby dramatically reducing server downtime as well as potentially lost business. By contrast, prior to installing Acronis' software, a replacement server would have to be delivered to the appropriate store and then manually rebuilt on site, which could take anything up to eleven hours.

Designs for the Future

Rylands also selected Acronis because of the company's OEM capabilities. He is now working closely with Acronis' development team to create a bespoke disk imaging solution for Brown Thomas' POS machines. *"We predict that once the solution is in place, we should be able to rebuild a POS unit within five minutes. That's a massive improvement as it currently takes us anything from 90 minutes to two hours."* Brown Thomas' IT team are all extremely pleased with the way in which Acronis has performed and are planning to install the vendor's Acronis® Recovery™ for Microsoft Exchange solution to protect the retailer's email servers. Rylands also notes that there are other functions that he's yet to try, such as Acronis' remote server and workstation deployment, as well as the option to recover data to any make or model of hardware – regardless of the platform it originated from – through the Acronis® Universal Restore™ module. *"There's also an option on the Acronis True Image Workstation solution to create an Acronis Secure Zone® partition from which machines can be rebooted without the need of a system disk,"* comments Rylands.

"Acronis has brought peace of mind to us all, and an increased level of confidence in the way we backup and recover our data. At the end of the day, you just can't put a price on that," concludes Ryland.

About Brown Thomas

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About Acronis®

Acronis is a global provider of storage management software that enables corporations and individuals to move, manage and maintain digital assets. Acronis sells innovative solutions for disaster recovery, server consolidation and virtualization migration, which allow users to maintain business continuity and reduce downtime in computing environments. Acronis software products are sold in more than 180 countries and are available in 13 languages. For additional information, please visit www.acronis.eu

For additional information please visit <http://www.acronis.eu>



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