

Acronis True Image Success Story – Cathay Pacific Holidays

Company

- Cathay Pacific Holidays

Industry

- Travel Services

Key Challenges

- Full daily server disk backups
- Fast retrieval of backup files
- Short backup cycle
- Highly stable backup solution
- Ability to backup data in open files

Environment

- Six mission-critical Microsoft Windows servers
- More than 60 Microsoft Windows workstations

Solution

- Acronis True Image 8.0 Enterprise Server for Windows

Business Benefits

- Lower TCO than previous tape-based regime
- Zero server downtime
- Easy and swift implementation
- Easy to use, no training required to implement the system
- Higher level of service to end-users

Overview

Cathay Pacific Holidays is a wholly-owned subsidiary of Cathay Pacific Airways. Headquartered in Hong Kong, it offers a wide range of tailor-made, all-in-one holiday packages targeted at independent travelers.

Like its parent, Cathay Pacific Holidays leverages on information and Internet technology to streamline its business process, communicate with its partners, customers and staff, and deliver superior service to its customers.

The company, which receives a large percentage of bookings via email or an online booking facility on its Website, operates six Windows-based servers. These host daily-use documents and images of hotels, destinations, various other travel-related marketing and sales documents, email, faxes, voice and data records of calls made to Cathay Pacific Holidays' call center, and databases containing customer information.

Approximately 60 users access the information and applications on the servers via a network, safe in the knowledge that an image of the server disks are created every day and stored on a Network Attached Storage (NAS) server. The software used to create the images is Acronis True Image Enterprise Server.

However, while today the users know their data is safe, that level of comfort was not always so high.

Challenges

Before Cathay Pacific Holidays implemented Acronis True Image Enterprise Server on its servers, it was using BrightStor ARCserve Backup from Computer Associates, which copied the server disk images onto tape. Due to the continuously increasing volume of data, however, only incremental backups were performed on a daily basis (full backups were done once a week). Even then, the duration of the backup process was unacceptably lengthy.

"We scheduled Brightstor ARCserve Backup to run at 11 p.m. and the job normally finished at 4–5 a.m. For some reason, Microsoft Word and Excel files, of which we have plenty, took a long time to backup," said Gemini Wong, IT Manager, Cathay Pacific Holidays. "Another thing we noticed was the backup time varied quite a lot between servers; the reason for this couldn't be traced. In addition, while the software was supposed to be able to backup open files, there were problems with Lotus Notes R6 files, with 'backup failure' messages not uncommon."

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The CA software was also "not quite stable." Multiple errors were found on the log file sometimes and IT staff had to do regular checks to make sure that data was being backed up properly. This imposed a heavy manpower burden on the IT function and was one of the main reasons behind the decision to move to disk-to-disk (D2D) backup.

The cost advantage offered by the D2D model was another reason, disk space being cheaper than its tape brethren.

"With the data volume growing at a fast rate, we have had, in the past few years, needed to install new backup devices every one or two years. Five years ago we were using a 20/40GB backup drive. We added a 100/200GB drive three years ago, and that was followed a year later by a 200/400GB tape autoloader. As you can imagine, these 'investments' became harder and harder to justify from an ROI perspective," said Mr. Wong.

Product Evaluation

After having decided that Brightstor ARCserve Backup could no longer meet its backup needs and that the D2D model offered a lower total cost of ownership (TCO) than a tape-based regime, Cathay Pacific Holidays conducted a review of available solutions. Using performance, accuracy, and compatibility with its IT environment as the main evaluation criteria, it drew up a shortlist with just two entries: Acronis True Image Enterprise Server and Symantec LiveState Recovery Manager.

Trial versions of each product were downloaded from the respective Websites and tested on all six servers.

"We started with the Symantec software, which took about 25 minutes to clone one server disk. The Acronis solution, on the other hand, took less than 15 minutes. That swung the decision in its favor. What we also like about Acronis True Image Enterprise Server is its small footprint size-wise, which translates into very low CPU utilization," said Mr. Wong.

Implementation was a breeze. Cathay Pacific Holidays first installed Acronis True Image Enterprise Server on one server and used it for a week, during which checks were made to ensure that the clones were exact copies of the working server disks. Once this was verified, the implementation of the solution was expanded to the other servers. Full backups of all the servers are performed automatically at scheduled times everyday, with the entire cycle for all six servers (about 400GB in total) taking less than two hours.

Benefits

Besides zero downtime, a much shorter backup cycle, and lower TCO, the use of Acronis True Image Enterprise Server at Cathay Pacific Holidays has also enabled the IT team to provide a higher level of service to their end-user colleagues.

Occasionally, the IT team receives requests from end users to retrieve backup copies of files that were deleted by accident. When Brightstor ARCserve Backup was in use, the retrieval process was a lengthy one. Now, with Acronis True Image Enterprise Server in place, it takes just a few minutes to copy the server disk clone with the desired file to another drive and then retrieve the file from the second copy.

Obviously pleased with the benefits from the Acronis solution, Cathay Pacific Holidays plans to expand its deployment to every one of its new servers, said Mr. Wong.


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