Case study

Interpublic Group Australia gains backup peace of mind

HP ensures Interpublic Group's backup data is readily available

Industry
Advertising

Objective
Provide a reliable and cost-effective replacement for an existing tape backup system

Approach
Investigated numerous tape back-up and disk-based backup solutions before selecting incumbent server supplier HP

IT matters
- Significant cost reduction of regular back-ups with over $32,000 savings in tape media alone per annum.
- Faster restoration of data from disk in comparison to the tape-based system from hours to minutes, reducing the workload for the IT team
- Centralised back-up to disk provides a full disaster recovery solution for the company

Business matters
- Reduced risk of data loss through a combination of distributed backup and centralised disaster recovery, safeguarding business and customer data
- Accelerated data restoration times, ensuring a faster return to normal operations faster in the event of a failure.
- Enhanced reliability of data backup for each business group without the need for additional spending on local IT skills

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>
> – Dean Hislop, infrastructure manager, Interpublic Group, Australia

The diversified communications firm is using-disk based storage from HP to both ensure that backups are readily available when needed

With offices in over 100 countries and more than 40,000 employees, Interpublic Group is a premier provider of advertising and marketing services, with capabilities in fields ranging from public relations and consumer advertising to mobile and search engine marketing. The Australian operation of Interpublic Group encompasses multiple divisions which providing a wide range of marketing and advertising services, operating from offices in six cities, and its various businesses are grouped into eight operating units.

Like many media-related businesses, Interpublic Group's increasing reliance on digital technology to service its customers has led to a greater requirement for reliable and fast backup and recovery solutions. But the distributed nature of the business means that not all of Interpublic Group's offices are permanently staffed with IT support personnel.

Seeking a better backup
For a long time Interpublic Group had relied on tape-based technology to provide its backup and recovery needs. But the company's distributed nature meant this was proving both expensive to manage and difficult to maintain, particularly regarding the provisioning of tapes to each site.

"Traditionally tape is slow to restore from, and quite expensive, as you are constantly having to purchase new tapes," says Dean Hislop, infrastructure manager at Interpublic Group Australia.

There were also concerns as to how reliable the process would be should data recovery become necessary.

So in 2011 the company conducted a review of its backup needs, and measured the cost effectiveness of various media options. This included for the first time the option of shifting from the company's reliance on tape media as its core backup solution in favour of a disk-based solution.

Hislop says Interpublic Group had not previously investigated disk technology, due to its perceived high upfront cost when compared with tape. This was despite disk-based solutions generally having faster data recovery than tape-based solutions,

But with the Interpublic Group becoming increasingly dependent on reliable IT systems to meet the deadline-driven needs of clients, the need to recover quickly from any potential data loss was growing in importance. Hence the need for a reliable and rapid recovery solution began to override perceived cost issues.

At the suggestion of Interpublic Group's long-term technology supplier Triforce Australia Hislop and his team investigated HP StoreOnce Backup Systems, which provide flexible disk-to-disk (D2D) backup with HP StoreOnce de-duplication.

Hislop says Interpublic Group has enjoyed a long term working relationship with HP and Triforce Australia (Triforce), an HP partner company, which played an important part in scoping the work, project management and implementation as well as providing after sales support. It has also been a buyer of HP servers for more than five years. While the different divisions have had generally not shared costs for IT infrastructure, buying the D2D technology provided an opportunity to deliver shared backup infrastructure across all of the Interpublic Group operating divisions and sites, delivering a new support model for the company.

More efficient backup
Because of the distributed nature of the organisation it was decided to install D2D4000 series and D2D2500 series devices into each of Interpublic Group's 13 remote offices, in conjunction with HP partner, Triforce.

The new model sees each site automatically backed up to this local device, which retains one month of backup data. The entire process is managed centrally by Hislop and his team in a managed services model.

All of these devices are then replicated to a larger D2D4312 unit with 36 TB of storage at Interpublic Group's central data centre, providing full disaster recovery purposes. Interpublic Group has not entirely eliminated tape back-ups however, as Hislop says that a quarterly backup is still made using the data stored at its central facility.

Hislop says centralised disaster recovery has helped to fulfil his overall objective for the project.

"The intention was to be able to retrieve up to three months of backup at any time," Hislop says. "Not only has HP D2D technology given us a chance to remove the cost of tape media and storage, it is also effectively a disaster recovery plan for our organisation."

Use of the D2D devices has also enabled Hislop and his team to integrate the hardware with the company's global mandated software-based backup regime, using technology from CommVault.

"Working for a large corporation, you've got to comply with stringent regulations," Hislop says. "The HP devices communicate clearly with CommVault from the point of view of setting up a virtual tape library, and it's worked really well."

Practical benefits
The value of the D2D devices was demonstrated soon after their implementation in early 2012 when a server at one of the company's offices suffered a double disk failure.

"Everything was lost, basically," Hislop says. "We had to get some hard disks sent out to that site, and they had to rebuild the box from scratch and restore the data, and we did that using the local backup device."

Hislop says the whole process was much faster than would have been the case had the backups been stored on tape.

"The server rebuild started at midnight, and was up and running by the morning," Hislop says. "We were able to restore 350 GBs and rebuild the server from scratch."

Better data management
Hislop is also impressed with the level of de-duplication achieved through HP StoreOnce technology, which routinely achieves de-duplication ratios of 5 to 1, even though a large portion of Interpublic's data is comprised of graphic and media files which typically do not de-duplicate. Hislop says de-duplication is becoming increasingly important, as data growth within the company is accelerating.

Customer solution at a glance

Hardware
• HP StoreOnce D2D4312 Backup System
• HP StoreOnce D2D4112 Backup System
• HP StoreOnce D2D4106 Backup System
• HP StoreOnce D2D2504 Backup System

Software
• HP StoreOnce Deduplication Software

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"The technology is really easy to configure and really easy to use, and we are getting good results out of it," Hislop says. "We've got a lot of high end and large graphic files and we are getting great de-duplication ratios."

The use of de-duplication also enables Interpublic to reduce data traffic on its network by ensuring that only changed blocks of data are replicated across the network.

The HP StoreOnce backup technology has now become an important part of the service offering for IT within Interpublic Group, delivering confidence that business units can meet the tight deadlines of clients even in the event of data loss. Hislop says that when the company acquired a new business in mid-2012 he immediately placed an order for two more units.

"We're saving money and providing a disaster recovery and a more effective backup solution," Hislop says. "I couldn't ask for anything more."

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– Dean Hislop, infrastructure manager, Interpublic Group, Australia

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