

Hudson News® to Virtualize its Line-of-Business Applications Using Acronis®



Hudson News Distributors, based in North Bergen, NJ, ships books and magazines to thousands of retail locations every other day, including its own Hudson News retail outlets in 69 airports and travel terminals throughout the United States and Canada. The company is growing quickly, and as it grows, Acronis® Backup & Recovery™ 10 products are playing an increasing role in the distributor's ability to support its line-of-business applications.

Making the decision to virtualize

Early in 2010, the company came to the conclusion that it could help control rising IT costs, contain hardware expenditures and reduce the impact of unexpected downtime by virtualizing much of its physical server environment. Plans became more concrete as the company decided to move to a new server facility in the fall of 2010, says Suyog Gaiki, Senior IT Administrator. When this occurs, business applications including Microsoft® Exchange, Microsoft SQL Server™ databases, warehouse management and more will be placed on VMware® virtual servers on VMware ESX platforms, with backup primarily over SAN and NAS, with some server-resident storage.

Migrating to a virtual environment will help Hudson contain IT spending while reducing power consumption. Plus, it will significantly reduce downtime as the company expects to achieve faster recoveries in a virtualized environment. The end result will be higher service levels at lower costs.

Real-world testing gives the nod to Acronis

The company has used CA Technologies ARCserve® Backup software products for 15 years for their physical server population, says Gaiki. However, performance issues precluded its use for backing up a virtual machine population. After reading some reviews and talking to colleagues who use Acronis data protection software within their IT facilities, Hudson News decided to give Acronis Backup & Recovery Advanced Server Virtual Edition a try. *"We checked backup performance and it's a lot faster than any other software we have, including CA's,"* Gaiki says. *"We also tried Symantec, but didn't like that either, based on price point, performance and support."*

Company:

Hudson News
www.hudsonnewsgroup.com

Sector:

Retail distribution

Key Challenges:

Virtualization effort to reduce costs, increase reliability

Environment:

- 20 Microsoft® Windows®-based virtual servers running on five VMware® hosts.
- Microsoft SQL Server™ database applications
- Microsoft Exchange and other line-of-business applications

Solution:

- Acronis® Backup & Recovery™ 10 Advanced Server
- Acronis® Backup & Recovery™ 10 Advanced Server Virtual Edition
- Acronis® Backup & Recovery™ 10 Advanced Workstation

Benefits:

- Will deliver higher service levels at lower cost.
- Acronis performed faster than competing products the company survey.
- Pricing model of Acronis® Backup & Recovery™ 10 Advanced Server Virtual Edition allows the company to protect more virtual machines, improving ROI.

Gaiki purchased Acronis® Backup & Recovery™ 10 Advanced Server Virtual Edition and has been using it to test the backup and recovery performance of servers that will be virtualized when migration to the new space begins. *“Our primary use for the Acronis software at present is to create images if I need to recover complete systems elsewhere, including remote disaster recovery sites,”* he says, adding that he also protects a few key workstations with Acronis Backup & Recovery 10 Advanced Workstation. The bulk of the test procedures have involved an ESX machine hosting four or five virtual servers running on that box. But ultimately the company will be running 20 virtual machines on five physical servers. *“Right now we’re operating an extended test environment in preparation for moving into a new building and putting in new VMware ESX boxes,”* Gaiki says.

Virtualization testing has been extensive, but the company has already completed the migration of its domain controllers into a production virtual environment. These controllers host several functions, including the company’s BlackBerry® and enterprise servers as well as application servers that run SQL and Informix databases. Here, Acronis delivers an invaluable data protection resource.

Instant restore feature under consideration

“It would be a big blow to lose a server like the domain controller because we schedule deliveries every other day,” Gaiki explains. If a domain controller fails, Hudson News can use Acronis to restore its backup image onto a VMware server located on an ESX host to limit downtime, but there is still time required to load the data after the domain controller’s applications have been restored. That’s why Gaiki is also looking into Acronis Instant Recovery, a built-in feature that would allow the company to create a “hot spare” virtual domain controller populated by backups that occur every five minutes. Costs are very low to institute this feature (basically the space it takes up in a server plus the requirement for adequate disk space and memory space on the host), and it would allow the IT team to instantly launch the virtual machine and continue operating. Because this machine is never more than five minutes from its last backup, users are unlikely to notice that there was ever an interruption in the first place.

Efficient transition to virtual environment

A combination of Acronis features promise to help Hudson News make an efficient transition to a virtual environment. Just as important, it will provide verifiable data protection for the company’s 20 virtual machines, helping to ensure that stores are stocked on time. *“We need to be able to recover quickly and ensure that deliveries go out regularly,”* Gaiki says. *“Our stores depend on this because it could otherwise result in losses of tens of thousands of dollars a day. We like the performance so far, and we especially like the fact that Acronis Backup & Recovery 10 Advanced Server Virtual Edition allows us to put as many VMware servers as we like on one host, while paying only a single license fee for the physical machine.”*

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.com/



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Acronis office details can be found at <http://www.acronis.com/company/worldwide.html>

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