

Health Care Revenue Management Company Brings Virtual Servers Back To Health Faster With Acronis®



“If we lost our Exchange server, we would lose at least 20% productivity; a primary file server - about 50%. That’s why we are using Acronis Backup & Recovery® software.”

Kurtis Berger - Provider Advantage NW, Inc.

Provider Advantage NW, Inc. is a software and service company based in Portland, Oregon specializing in revenue cycle management for health care providers. Formed in 1991, the company writes and sells software that makes it much easier to optimize revenues by establishing payment responsibility for health care services.

The company runs two distinct IT operations totaling about 100 VMware® virtual servers, with about 40 active at any one time for company operations and another 20 active servers supporting customer-facing applications like Revenue360™, MoneyFinder and Fast Claims RX. The virtual machines are hosted on 14 VMware® ESX(i) servers running on Dell® PowerEdge™ r410, 1950 and 2950 machines. The firm also maintains six Dell physical servers.

Productivity can be adversely affected by downtime

Over the past few years, Provider Advantage had a tough time finding a system- and file-level backup solution it could be satisfied with, especially one that met its increased requirements for protection across a growing number of virtual servers, and SAN backup requirements ranging between 13 and 15 terabytes. In particular, it needed a better way to recover from server outages lasting one to three days, according to Kurtis Berger, Provider Advantage’s Information Technology Manager. Ultimately the company chose Acronis Backup & Recovery® software.

Organization:

Provider Advantage NW, Inc.
www.provider-advantage.com

Sector:

Health Care

Environment:

Heavily virtualized VMware® environment with outward facing applications, Microsoft Exchange, domain controller and more running on Dell PowerEdge® servers, with SAN storage

Key Challenges:

- Existing backup and recovery solutions failed to deliver desired productivity levels.
- 1 to 3-day outages created 20%, 50% and higher productivity losses, depending on applications impacted.
- Support ticket resolution times measured in days, sometimes months, occasionally beyond one year.

Solution:

Acronis Backup & Recovery® Virtual Edition

Benefits:

- Recoveries reduced from one, two or three days to between 15 minutes and an hour
- Low protection costs per virtual server using one-price-per-host/unlimited servers-per-host licensing
- Reduced administration

The company had been using Symantec® Backup Exec™, but over time, features they once could rely on would not work properly with each other. Obtaining adequate support was challenging, too. “Time to resolution was commonly several days, and some issues extended beyond one year,” Berger says. Frustrated, the company eventually switched to Zmanda™ backup and recovery software, but problems with basic functions often meant that service tickets were open for months. They resorted to a robocopy utility, (short for Robust File Copy), to back up key data, and continued their search for a more robust solution.

Provider Advantage wanted good support and much faster recoveries, according to Berger, but being a small business, the solution they choose also had to be affordable. While they had considered Unitrends® software, pricing issues removed it from contention. When they became aware of Acronis Backup & Recovery software, they learned that Acronis’ one-price-per-host licensing model used in the virtual edition version of the product allowed them to place an unlimited number of virtual machines (VMs) on each host for a single license price. This would reduce the cost of protecting each virtual machine dramatically.

Acronis support factored into purchase decision

Berger worked alongside Jachin Crawford, a system administrator who supervised the test preparations for the evaluation. “We found Acronis to be reliable for both file-level and bare-metal recoveries. Moreover, the support we received during the evaluation period was outstanding, and that factored heavily in our decision to purchase,” Berger says.” He points out that Acronis’ ease of use was nearly as important to the company as functionality. “When Jachin saw the product installed, he immediately commented on how intuitive it is. This was important because he’ll be heavily focused on administration.”

In the middle of 2011, Provider Advantage ordered licenses and began to put their Acronis Backup & Recovery solution into production. Initial results have exceeded expectations. “We got the first 35 servers running under Acronis in just a few days. We’ve already found that we can recover VMs much quicker,” Berger says. The first major payoff on their purchase came just after Acronis was installed. “We had to carry out five recoveries at once. Acronis allowed us to recover them quickly and without incident. Since this happened during a maintenance period, users never even noticed that the server was down.”

Ideal for virtualized environments

In the short time Provider Advantage has been using Acronis, their concerns about recovering after a server failure have effectively been eliminated. “We now have confidence in our backups,” Berger says. “This is new to us. We purchased this product explicitly with our VMs in mind. We know we can back up entire VMs with Acronis Backup & Recovery software, and we know we can recover them when we need to.”

He adds, “If we lost our Exchange server, we would lose at least 20% productivity, and about 50% for a primary file server. A domain controller failure would have an even greater impact. That’s why we’re using Acronis Backup & Recovery software.”



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

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