

School District Enhances IT Self-sufficiency with Acronis®



Schleicher County Independent School District (SCISD) serves an area of more than 1300 square miles in a county of just under 3,000 people and 625 students. J.D. Doyle, their director of information technology, wears many hats as the district's sole IT support. He serves the needs of students, teachers and administrators who are spread over an elementary school, a middle school and a high school in the west Texas town of Eldorado.

Self-sufficiency a necessity

In this lightly populated area of the country, IT self-sufficiency isn't just a virtue, but a necessity when you're many miles away from the nearest small city and three hours away from a large computer retailer. That's why Doyle depends on Acronis® software to protect the two resources that affect the productivity of the most number of administrators, teachers and students: a Microsoft® Exchange server and the district's Windows 2008 R2-based network domain controller.

With a tightly controlled IT budget, the school district evaluates data protection solutions with the idea of extracting maximum value. It uses Acronis as a disaster recovery solution almost exclusively, employing novel and highly cost-effective ways to deliver data redundancy with inexpensive USB-based media components including thumb drives and hard drives. In the case of the school district's Exchange Server, Doyle had backed it up with Veritas® software and tape drives, but a failure could take the server down for many hours as he reloaded the operating systems, applications and settings, and then the data. Often old backups were not compatible with the current equipment he was running, so he knew he wanted to invest in a more modern backup and recovery solution featuring disk imaging.

After doing some research, Doyle bought Acronis Recovery for Microsoft Exchange, and his usual response to a downed server was transformed overnight from panic to confidence. *"The first time it failed after I invested in Acronis, I was at an IT conference at Angelo State University one hour away. I got a call saying the email had stopped working, showing only a blue screen and an inability to boot properly. I drove back to the server room, pushed the F11 key, and restored the system from the hidden partition Acronis creates for disaster recovery. I was back at the conference the same day and nobody could believe I'd restored the system so quickly. I've sold Acronis indirectly into about 30 school districts based on my experience with it."*

Organization:

Schleicher County Independent School District
www.scisd.net

Sector:

Education K-12

Key Challenges:

- Domain Controller protection
- Maintain Exchange Server uptime
- Hours-long recoveries reduced productivity

Environment:

- Microsoft Exchange Server 2007?
- Windows Server 2008 R2 network domain controller

Solution:

- Acronis® Backup & Recovery™ 10 Advanced Server with Acronis Universal Restore™
- Acronis® Recovery™ for Microsoft Exchange

Benefits:

- Very fast system recoveries
- Promotes higher self-sufficiency
- 40% More efficient disk usage
- Ease of use
- Frees time for other work

Hardware failures less of a concern

A few months later, the Exchange Server, running on an Althon® 4400 server, experienced a second failure, this time a hardware problem, but Doyle was undeterred. He images the server every night onto a two-terabyte drive that goes into a vault for safekeeping and keeps two additional copies, including one that's placed on a separate image server. *"I used an Acronis image from Exchange and loaded it on a VMware® virtual machine I created on another server. It worked without any problems while I waited for new parts to come in,"* Doyle explains. *"Once repaired, I just backed up my virtual Exchange server and used Acronis Universal Restore [which enables fast restores to dissimilar hardware] to recover it back onto the repaired physical server."*

A hardware failure on a Microsoft Windows Server 2008 R2-based domain controller server yielded a similar happy result running Acronis Backup & Recovery 10 Universal Restore. The raid drive suffered a rare two-disk failure and the system had only one spare, effectively disabling the controller. *"Since it was a primary domain controller running our entire network, I had to get it up,"* Doyle explains. *"I restored its backup image temporarily to an old Dell® Optiplex® 520 with a half terabyte drive and waited for the drive replacements to arrive. I wasn't in a hurry at this point because it was working fine. When I had some time, I repaired the RAID drive and restored the domain controller in just about 30 minutes, including the time it took to load 15-20 GB of data."*

Appreciates return on Acronis investment

Doyle makes a point of squeezing every bit out of every dollar he spends to make sure the district's IT systems are running as they should, but he appreciates his Acronis investment. *"Spending \$800 on Acronis is nothing compared to the several hours of my time if I couldn't fix a server. Whether it's a blue screen failure that can be fixed by pushing F11 or a hardware failure, I just restore an image and the server's ready to go."*

Acronis' data compression feature saves money too, with full compression yielding a 40% smaller backup volume. The length of the school day gives him a large backup window so the school system can afford the time it takes to maximize its disk storage investment.

Upgrade on the Horizon

Looking forward, the school district is facing a PC upgrade to Windows® 7. It's already tested Acronis® Snap Deploy® to test deployments to the school's PCs and purchased a deployment server, so Doyle will be working on that project when time permits. And the school district is considering more work to virtualize some of its physical servers to reduce overall purchase and maintenance costs, taking advantage of Acronis support for all major virtual platform vendors, including the school's VMware® and Parallels® Virtuozzo platforms.

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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