



Business Profile

Company Name:
Conner Strong & Buckelew

Headquarters:
Marlton, NJ & Philadelphia, PA (USA)

Industry:
Insurance

Business Environment:

- Founded: 1959
- Premium volume: \$1-billion
- Employees: 300
- Clients throughout U.S. and abroad

Implementation Team:
Conner Strong & Buckelew and
Vision Solutions

"A huge benefit is the peace of mind that comes with knowing that our data is being replicated in real-time and we can easily bring it back very quickly if necessary."

— Joseph Rukas, Vice President and Chief Technology Officer

Critical Issue

Conner Strong & Buckelew puts a high priority on the need to protect its data and its ability to serve its customers even if a disaster should strike. But more than just being able to recover data and applications, it needs to be able to do so quickly to safeguard business continuity and to ensure customer satisfaction.

Results

- Reduced recovery times
- Reduced bandwidth utilization
- Simplified recovery process
- Provided peace of mind

Technologies

Software:

- Double-Take RecoverNow for AIX
- Sagitta Agency Management System (Vertafore)
- AIX

Hardware:

- 2 x IBM Power 720 (production and backup)

Business Challenge

Conner Strong & Buckelew used to protect its data using an asynchronous, hardware-based SAN-to-SAN mirroring technology, but that solution was inadequate. To restore data, an operator had to stop the replication processes, start the new server, present the LUN to the server, and normalize the data. This could take as long as four hours, which was unacceptable. Thus, one of the company's challenges was to find a way to significantly reduce recovery times.

In addition, the mirroring technology did not provide any way to verify that corrupted data had not entered the mirror during replication or subsequently. Furthermore, the solution was very difficult to test, meaning that Conner Strong & Buckelew did not have as high a level of confidence in the integrity of the mirror as it would have liked. Therefore, another of the company's challenges was to find a more reliable technology.

These issues were impetus enough to find a better backup and recovery solution, but the company's hand was forced when the mirroring process broke. The vendor tried unsuccessfully to fix it and, because the technology was no longer supported, the vendor wouldn't replace it.

This left Conner Strong & Buckelew's with daily file-level backups as its only data protection. This was completely unacceptable. Recovery would have taken too long and data created between the daily backups was unprotected.



Solution

Conner Strong & Buckelew found an easy solution to its disaster recovery (DR) challenges: Double-Take RecoverNow for AIX, which replicates data from a production server to a backup in real-time, while also providing true Continuous Data Protection to enable point-in-time recovery. The ability to restore data to an earlier state can be invaluable if data is corrupted due to operator error or malicious intent. You can then “dial back” your data to a point before the corruption occurred.

Conner Strong & Buckelew uses Double-Take RecoverNow to replicate data from its primary server in Conshohocken, PA to a backup server about 70 miles away in Bethlehem, PA. The separation of the two systems makes this a true DR solution. If either system is hit by a disaster, the company’s data and applications will still be available at the other data center.

Conner Strong & Buckelew has tested recovering data both up to the instant and up to a point fifteen minutes prior to initiating the recovery. In both cases, the recovery was fast, easy and flawless. The company is now confident that it will be able to fully recover its data in less than 30 minutes should the need arise, compared to up to four hours using the old mirroring technology.

The solution has already proved its robustness. The HMC in the company’s recovery data center recently failed. As a result, the replication processes could not connect to the backup system. That wasn’t a problem. Double-Take RecoverNow buffered all data changes. When the HMC was rebuilt and the backup system was online again, replication was restarted and the systems were resynchronized in less than an hour.

The new solution also significantly reduces bandwidth requirements. The old hardware mirroring technology used approximately 80 to 100 MB/sec of the company’s 200 MB/sec fiber link. In contrast, Double-Take RecoverNow uses only about 4 MB/sec when it is performing a full replication and about 2 MB/sec when it’s replicating just changed data.

Support is another Double-Take RecoverNow advantage. “It was very nice knowing that when I had the problem with the HMC I was able to call support late on a Saturday night,” said Joseph Rukas, Vice President and Chief Technology Officer. “I got right to a person who knew the product very well. After explaining the situation I was in and discussing what I was seeing in the web console, she confirmed that the system was functioning as expected and that my production system was completely fine. She also took the time to explain to me what was going on and how the application was logging my data changes.”



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