VA TECH SAT

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Thomas Berger, Server Administrator, VA TECH SAT

The Situation

VA TECH SAT is part of the VA TECH group and is a specialised supplier of automation systems for spatially distributed processes. The global company—headquartered in Vienna, Austria—focuses on energy supply processes, and provides solutions for the electricity, gas, oil and district heating industries, as well as the energy supply in transportation systems. VA TECH SAT develops its own products on which it bases the automation, protection, control and communication systems and solutions implemented for the industries it serves. The company has 940 staff worldwide and recorded revenues of €138 million in 2003.

To sustain its leading position in automation systems, VA TECH SAT needs to remain agile and quick to respond to sales opportunities and customer needs. Until recently though, this nimbleness did not extend to the company’s backup and restore environment. VA TECH SAT was relying on IBM Tivoli Storage Manager (TSM) to execute its backup processes but the performance was proving to be a challenge.

“Whenever we had large data volumes to restore, TSM was extremely slow,” says Thomas Berger, Server Administrator at VA TECH SAT’s headquarters in Vienna, Austria. “On the version of TSM we were using, it was not possible to backup to disk—everything went to tape. We were being asked to do maybe three restores each day—mainly on behalf of the development team. These were small restores of about 20 megabytes, which wasn’t a problem. Our immediate concern was how to restore an entire server. If there had been a problem, we would have been frantically switching from tape to tape in an effort to restore the server. We can’t afford this sort of an outage experience. Plus it resulted in an excessively slow backup and restore process.”

10 out of 16 VA TECH SATs sites across Europe and Asia were faced with equally challenging problems using TSM.

“We recognised the need to re-organise our backup and reviewed solutions from VERITAS Software, IBM and Commvault,” Berger continues. “We tested all three solutions and it was abundantly clear that it was more straightforward to backup to disk and tape using VERITAS Backup Exec™. Other factors which influenced our decision were VERITAS Software’s market leadership, their knowledge of backup and restore and the quality and breadth of their customer references.”
The Solution

VA TECH SAT deployed VERITAS Backup Exec™ for Windows Servers at its Vienna headquarters and across 10 sites along with Microsoft Exchange, Microsoft SQL and Oracle agents, to provide comprehensive, cost-effective and high performance protection for its Windows server environment. It manages the backup routines across 30 HP and Dell Windows servers at headquarters. Every day, it is used to incrementally backup all Exchange, SQL and Oracle data online to an HP disk server and a full backup is conducted each week-end. Every fortnight, data is backed up to a 60-slot Dell LTO library. It collectively comprises up to three terabytes of storage. Now, all 16 offices use VERITAS Backup Exec™ for Windows Servers to back up their data locally to tape, with and without staging to disk before depending on the size of the location.

The Success

The primary benefit is improved backup and recovery performance. VERITAS Backup Exec™ for Windows Servers is designed to minimise network traffic and maximise throughput performance. “Using Tivoli Storage Manager it used to take up to 20 minutes to backup or recover a file, depending on its size and position on the tape. Using VERITAS Backup Exec™ for Windows Servers, we can complete the task in less than five minutes,” says Berger. “The Windows Change Journal in the VERITAS solution also means that we can backup even faster if we need to. We also have the option of single instance storage for message attachments, incremental and differential and mailbox backups and individual public folder restore. Its performance and flexibility is excellent.”

Faster backup and restore is matched by ease of use. Staff at the remote sites—even those untrained in the backup routines—have no problem in regularly managing their local data protection environment. There’s automatic discovery for detecting new unprotected resources, colour coded job logs and easy identification of success or failure to help them. Moreover, the Web-based graphical user interface means remote staff, as well as Berger’s team in Vienna, have complete administrative functionality, such as access to technical support information, details about backup jobs, media and alerts status. The result? A reduced opportunity for errors occurring and less administrative workload for the headquarters staff.

The bullet-proof data protection is not to be overlooked. Data duplication functionality can automatically create a secondary copy of any backup media for maintaining on-site and off-site copies with different data retention periods. “It’s important to have on-line backups, because it allows us to protect data without interrupting business. We also conduct log file backup on the SQL server.”

The other advantage is reduced cost. By implementing VERITAS Backup Exec™ for Windows Servers, VA TECH SAT has reduced its total backup ownership costs because it only needs a smaller backup server and library. “VERITAS was cheaper than the IBM solution, too!” says Berger.

VERITAS Consulting assisted VA TECH SAT with the implementation in Germany and Austria. “They were quick, efficient and excellent at knowledge-transfer,” according to Berger. “We are looking forward to a very positive relationship with VERITAS Software as we move forward. Their backup solution is ideally suited to our needs and will cope seamlessly with our future growth.”

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