

Zhejiang Tobacco

Cutting Backup and Recovery Time in Half with Solutions from Symantec



Zhejiang Tobacco supplies about 5 billion packs of cigarettes to Chinese smokers every year. In 2006 and 2007, the company sought to upgrade the reliability and efficiency of both backups and data storage. Veritas NetBackup cut the time for both backups and recovery in half, increased reliability and made backups easier to manage. Veritas Storage Foundation increased data availability from 80 percent to 99.99 percent, and allowed the flexibility to combine storage arrays of different brands, creating a substantial savings.

ORGANIZATION PROFILE

Founded in 1984, Zhejiang Tobacco began as a tobacco cooperative, and was allowed to grow to compete with foreign tobacco companies. Today it supplies 2.35 million cases of cigarettes—more than 5 billion packs—to Chinese citizens each year.

INDUSTRY

Manufacturing

SOLUTION

Data Protection;
Business Continuity

Competing in Global Markets

Founded in 1984, Zhejiang Tobacco began as a tobacco cooperative and was allowed to grow so as to provide a Chinese alternative to foreign cigarettes. Today, Zhejiang Tobacco employs about 12,000 people and provides 2.35 million cases of cigarettes—more than 5 billion packs—to Chinese smokers each year. Sales have grown 10 percent annually for the past three years, and reached about 450 billion RMB in 2007.

Zhejiang Tobacco's data is managed through 12 data centers, one in its Hangzhou headquarters, 11 more at its regional locations. A staff of 190 IT professionals keeps the company's systems running, with about 15 staff members working on backup tasks, and about 15 more working on data storage management.

Improving Backup Efficiency

IT indirectly supports Zhejiang Tobacco's overall profitability, according to Mr. Xu Yong Xiang, information center department director. "IT helps with efficiency and decision-making by providing centralized information," he says. This is one reason Zhejiang Tobacco's IT staff strives to keep its systems running as efficiently as possible.

With this drive to efficiency in mind, in 2006, Zhejiang Tobacco's IT staff made a change from HP Data Protector Software to Veritas NetBackup™ from Symantec to perform automated backups. "We were looking for something faster, more reliable, and easier to manage," Mr. Xu explains. Veritas NetBackup is now running in the Hangzhou data center, and in each of the remote data centers, providing backups at each site.

NetBackup is at least 50 percent faster, he adds. With the previous solution, performing an incremental backup at the Hangzhou data center, or at any of the regional centers, would require 3 to 4 hours for about 2 TB of data, he says. "Now it takes less than 2 hours."

Faster and easier backups translate into savings in staff time, he says. "We save at least half the time our staff members spend on backups," he says. "They all have other duties, so this frees them for those tasks."

"We chose NetBackup because it is more reliable, and has more complete support."

Mr. Xu Yong Xiang

Information Center
Department Director
Zhejiang Tobacco

With backup and storage solutions by Symantec, Zhejiang Tobacco gained efficiency and reliability and saved approximately 2 million RMB or 250,000 USD.

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Recoveries Are Faster, Too

Not only backups, but recovering backed up data is substantially faster with NetBackup than with the previous solution, Mr. Xu reports. “Recovery times have been reduced about 50 percent,” he says. “That improves the efficiency of our production, and has saved money and increased profits.”

With NetBackup, Zhejiang Tobacco has implemented disk staging, preserving data on disk for two to three weeks before transferring it to tape—and enabling faster recovery of the most recent and useful information.

Before NetBackup, he adds, backing up data was labor-intensive and costly, and lacked reliability. “NetBackup allows us to have centralized backups which are more efficient, more cost-effective, and are easier to adjust as the business changes,” he says. “We estimate our savings from this greater efficiency at close to 1 million RMB [approximately 125,000 USD].”

Ultimately though, it was not the savings that sold Zhejiang Tobacco on NetBackup. “We chose NetBackup because it is more reliable, and has more complete support,” Mr. Xu says.

Speeding Server Recovery

Zhejiang Tobacco also recently implemented Symantec Backup Exec™ System Recovery Server Edition to create image-based backups of its sales and call center servers for quicker recovery to avoid business disruption.

“We’ve already used it a couple of times to restore servers after a hardware problem,” Mr. Xu says. “Recovery was significantly faster. Total recovery time was less than half an hour. Before, it would have taken two to three hours.”

SOLUTION AT A GLANCE

Business Drivers

- Increase reliability of backups
- Decrease time required for backups
- Decrease IT staff time for backups
- Reduce cost of storage and recovery
- Streamline backup and recovery management
- Streamline storage management

Technology Challenges

- Improve speed and reliability for backup solution
- Improve ease of management for backup solution
- Shorten recovery time for backups
- Create disk-to-disk-to-tape storage configuration
- Lower cost of expanding storage

Solution

Streamlined, disk-to-disk-to-tape backup; centralized storage management

Symantec Products

- Veritas NetBackup™
- Veritas Storage Foundation™ by Symantec
- Symantec Backup Exec™ System Recovery Server Edition

Technology Environment

- Applications: Customized Office Automation System; Siebel CRM application
- Database: Oracle 9i
- Servers: More than 500 Dell, HP, and IBM servers running Microsoft Windows® Server 2003
- Storage: HP StorageWorks 3000 Enterprise Virtual Array; Dell/EMC CX3-40 Disk Storage Array; Dell/EMC CX3-20 Disk Storage Array
- Tape Library: HP StorageWorks MSL6030 Tape Library

Symantec Services

- Symantec Essential Support Services
- Symantec Consulting Services

Symantec Partner

New Century Information Systems

“We have much higher data availability with Storage Foundation.

Before, it was about 80 percent.

Now, it’s about 99.99 percent.”

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99.99 Percent Data Availability

In addition to making backups more efficient and reliable, Zhejiang Tobacco sought to upgrade its disk storage from a single storage array to two arrays. The challenge was to control both the existing array and a new one from a single management tool, and virtually combine both units into a single pool of available storage. Zhejiang considered other options, including a storage solution from HP, but chose Veritas Storage Foundation™ by Symantec, which was deployed in January 2007.

Zhejiang Tobacco’s existing disk array was an HP StorageWorks 3000 Enterprise Virtual Array. Rather than having to purchase a second unit of the same or similar model, Storage Foundation allowed the company the flexibility to choose a different model—a Dell/EMC CX3-40 Disk Storage Array—and virtualize storage across both. “By buying the EMC CX3-40, we saved about 30 percent of the cost,” Mr. Xu notes.

And savings wasn’t the only benefit. “Once we put it in production, we discovered we have much higher data availability with Storage Foundation,” he says. “Before, it was about 80 percent. Now, it’s about 99.99 percent.”

BUSINESS VALUE AND TECHNICAL BENEFITS

Operational Efficiency

- 50% reduction in time for backups (4 hours to 2 hours)
- More than 75% reduction in recovery time for servers (2-3 hours to less than 30 minutes)
- 50% reduction in data recovery time
- Centralized data backup
- Improved backup reliability
- 99.99% data availability, improved from 80%

Cost Savings

- 30% savings in storage purchase expense
- 2 million RMB (about 250,000 USD) in savings from increased efficiencies
- 50% reduction in IT staff time spent on backups

Occasionally, IT staff members need to re-allocate storage between the two arrays, Mr. Xu says. Storage Foundation allows them to do this on the fly, without any need for downtime. It’s also easy to re-synchronize data between the arrays, he adds. “It takes only a couple of seconds.”

Thanks to all these benefits, Zhejiang Tobacco has not only saved on the purchase of storage units, but from more efficient storage usage as well. As with NetBackup, the company also estimates this savings at around 1 million RMB or 125,000 USD.

Support From a Symantec Partner

Zhejiang Tobacco uses Symantec Essential Support Services to support its Symantec products. The first tier of support is provided by Symantec partner New Century Information Systems, which, like Zhejiang Tobacco, is based in Hangzhou. “Their support is very helpful,” Mr. Xu says. In addition to support services, Zhejiang Tobacco uses Symantec Consulting Services to help with implementation. “They help us reach solutions more efficiently,” he notes.

Future plans for Zhejiang Tobacco include possible implementation of Symantec™ Endpoint Protection to secure the company’s network. “It can help us strategically enforce security,” Mr. Xu says.

In general, he adds, “Using Symantec products has increased the availability of our system, helped us centralize information and may help us increase enforcement of our security. At the same time, it has saved a lot of money in our IT management area.”

