IBM

Miller Group builds centralised backup architecture on IBM Tivoli Storage Manager

Overview

■ **The Challenge**
  Dealing with a constant interchange of information between construction sites and headquarters, Miller Group depends on the availability of its communications and ERP systems during operating hours. Without a centralised system, slow, unreliable backups were reducing availability and impairing productivity.

■ **The Solution**
  Worked with the Portal Partnership (www.portalpartnership.co.uk), an IBM Premier Business Partner, to implement IBM Tivoli Storage Manager under SUSE Linux on the IBM System x platform, with data stored on two IBM System Storage DS4000 series storage systems and backed up to an IBM TotalStorage 3584 tape library.

■ **The Benefits**
  Backups significantly faster and much more reliable, increasing availability; administrative workload reduced by over 90 per cent through automation and simplified architecture – all systems now use the same backup solution.

IBM **Premier Business Partner**

portal partnership

Miller Group, the UK's largest privately-owned house-building, property development and construction business, employs around 1,500 people at 26 offices across the UK, achieving a turnover of £1.2 billion in 2006.

The company manages large, complex and sometimes high-profile house-building and construction projects, and relies on IT to provide fast, effective channels of communication between external sites and its main offices. For its JD Edwards EnterpriseOne ERP system to deliver real benefits, business data must be able to flow freely through the organisation; and for the right management decisions to be made, the latest information on the status of each project must be constantly available.

In consequence, Miller Group puts considerable emphasis on the importance of high availability in its IT environment. With its existing architecture, availability was threatened by the lack of a coherent overall backup strategy.

The company was using best-of-breed applications running under a variety of operating systems, including SUSE Linux, Novell NetWare, Sun Solaris, and Microsoft Windows, each of which had its own backup system. With around 10TB of data spread across these different environments, administering all the backups was a complex proposition, often taking all night to complete.

"Our IT staff could be spending between two and four hours each day dealing with backups, and the responsibility for changing tapes and other related tasks was spread across a large number of employees," explains

Michael Leggiero, Group Enterprise Technology Manager at Miller Group. "Not all of the hardware was totally reliable, and in the event of failure, we would have to take a given system offline during working hours to re-run the backup – with a big impact on productivity."

"We wanted a less laborious procedure which would allow staff to focus on tasks which add value to the company, while increasing availability and ensuring that data can be stored safely and restored easily. A centralised solution was a must."

Single-source solution

Miller Group considered offerings from a number of vendors before choosing a solution based around IBM Tivoli Storage Manager.

"It is sometimes believed that smaller companies can't work easily with IBM, but this is just a myth," says Michael Leggiero. "In fact, we made a very reasonable deal, with the added benefit of single-vendor support, since IBM was able to provide the hardware platforms for the solution as well as the Tivoli software."

The implementation of the new solution was handled by the Portal Partnership, an IBM Premier Business Partner which delivers a wide-ranging set of solutions, combining skills and experience in Enterprise Portal, Messaging and Collaboration, Document Management, Storage, Security and Availability Management.

"The Portal Partnership listened to our requirements and delivered an end-to-end solution – everything from design to implementation, documentation, training and support," said Michael Leggiero. "We are now working with them to see how we can leverage our investment to provide further benefits for the business."

Faster, more robust backups

Miller Group now uses Tivoli Storage Manager running under SUSE Linux on the IBM System x platform to handle backups for all its various application environments. Files are now stored on a pair of IBM System Storage DS4000 storage systems, while tape storage is handled by an IBM TotalStorage 3584 tape library.

"We knew that the most important feature of the new solution would be the ability to restore data reliably, so we needed a dependable platform," says Michael Leggiero. "We chose to run Tivoli under Linux on System x because we felt it was a highly robust combination of hardware and software which would be easy for both our Solaris and Windows teams to use."

Tivoli Storage Manager now handles all backups centrally, using a policy-based system to automate the process and reduce the time staff have to spend on setting up, executing and overseeing backups. Since Tivoli backs up data incrementally, copying only the changes to each file, the entire process is much faster and the required backup window has been substantially reduced.

"Instead of two to four hours, staff now spend only five to ten minutes each day on backup administration – a time saving of over 90 per cent," says Michael Leggiero. "The entire backup process now takes just a few hours each night, so there is no longer any danger of over-running into the next day's production time. Even better, some of our systems can now be backed up without taking them offline at all."

"With this solution from IBM and the Portal Partnership, Miller Group benefits from a more robust backup system which helps to improve availability and keep the business moving," he concludes. "The automation of Tivoli Storage Manager, combined with the reliability of the IBM hardware, means that our staff need to spend less time on low-level maintenance and administration, and can concentrate on bringing real value to the business."