

Mountain America Credit Union

Customer Snapshot

Name

Mountain America
Credit Union

Overview

Banking | Regional
Community Credit Union

Location

Salt Lake City, UT

EVault Products

EVault® Software, EVault
Dual Vault, and EVault
agents for IBM AIX;
Microsoft® Exchange
and SQL Server;
VMware® ESX Server and
Open File Manager

Mountain America Credit Union Protects and Encrypts Symitar Data with EVault Data Protection

Mountain America Credit Union has changed somewhat from its humble beginnings in the 1930s as the credit union of choice for Utah telephone workers. Today, it's the second largest credit union in Utah and the 35th largest in the country, with much of its membership comprising state and local government employees, and several of Utah's leading corporations. Focusing on high quality and customer care, conservative investing and a careful eye toward protecting its customers, Mountain America now boasts over 300,000 members, 62 branch locations and close to \$2.8 billion in assets.

Goals

IT Systems Manager Travis Rice and IT Vice President Ray Carsey believed in the merits of disk-based backup for quite a while, prompting the early adoption of Symantec NetBackup. That worked fine when Mountain America only had to back up a handful of servers and applications. But as the number of servers grew and the infrastructure became more complex, Rice noticed more and more significant backup slowdowns as well as growing backup failure rates. He also recognized disk-based data protection had become a lot more complicated as he attempted to scale backup operations to encompass his organization's Symitar core banking solution and growing virtual server footprint.

After sharing some of these backup concerns with the credit union's advisor from Simpler-Webb (an information technology service provider and integrator to many credit unions), Rice was encouraged to run a trial of EVault Software from EVault, A Seagate Company. Based on what he knew about the solution from Simpler-Webb, he hoped it would allow Mountain America to:

- Streamline backups and bolster remote failover for Mountain America's Symitar Episys core banking system
- Reduce backup windows for current data sets
- Simplify and speed both backups and restores
- Make it easy to back up and restore data from 80+ virtual machines, based on VMware

Case Study

Mountain America
Credit Union

IT Environment

Symitar Episys core banking solution on IBM AIX platform. More than 40 MS Windows-based servers, including:

- VMware ESX Servers running 80 virtual machines
- Protected Guest OS application data associated with Citrix, Microsoft Exchange, SQL Server, file shares, Sybase, MySQL

Goals

- Improve backup, remote DR for core Symitar system
- Simplify and speed backups and restores
- Accommodate protection needs of virtual servers
- Bolster security, tighten compliance for NCUA audits

Solutions

Followed recommendation from Simpler-Webb to try EVault for local and remote backup and restores.

- Perform seamless end-to-end encryption of backup data from Symitar and other sensitive member applications
- Improve compliance with National Credit Union Administration (NCUA) audit best practices surrounding protection and disaster recovery of member data

Challenges

Mountain America's backup issues had become more than inconveniences. They threatened productivity and system capacity. As the credit union's production data grew past the 4TB mark, the nightly window required to finish backup jobs had gotten out of control. Backup failures on the credit union's 40 Windows-based servers had also begun to reach epic proportions. "I'd get 30 to 40 emails a day for failures from our old system," Rice said. "Issues ranged from the backup job not running or having run out of disk space during the disk-to-disk backup. It was frustrating. You'd increase the amount of disk space one day by 500 MB but the backup software wouldn't always account for that in the back-end."

Recovering the data had also become a challenge, especially in the face of the credit union's increasingly complex virtual server environment (consisting of 80 virtual machines hosted on 20 VMware ESX Servers). "It was hard to figure out where you went to do the restore sometimes with our old system. They had all these scripts and weird stuff you had to go through," Rice noted.

With applications ranging from Citrix and Exchange to SQL Server and file shares now supported by virtual servers, the backup process had become even more complex. Already unhappy with backup performance prior to implementing virtual servers, Rice was not swayed by his vendor's requirement to now add still more software product modules, more processes and more complexity to the mix in order to address the credit union's need to back up not just the virtual machine data but also each virtual machine operating system (VMDK). When problems arose during backups, Rice also hadn't been impressed by the red tape and lengthy resolution process he had to go through when requesting support from his current vendor.

Solutions

Rice and Carsey wanted a cleaner, simpler backup solution that could unify data protection for not just Mountain America's many windows applications, but also its Symitar and VMware environments. So they were interested when they heard Simpler-Webb describe the capabilities of EVault Software. They liked the fact that EVault was already deployed in hundreds of banks and credit unions.

Simpler-Webb explained how a trial of EVault Software would work in their environment. After seeing the software in operation for a month, Rice's verdict was swift. "Travis isn't very easily excited about new products," admitted Carsey. "But, he told me, 'This is the coolest thing I've seen in a long time.'" Usually prone to meet vendor claims of simplicity and power with a somewhat jaundiced eye, Rice quickly came to a startling realization with EVault: "I've been in the industry for about 18 years. Virtualization is the greatest invention I've seen since DOS. I'd put EVault Software right along side of it."

The simple interface and robustness of backup and recovery with the EVault solution was what ultimately won Rice over. "The number one driver was EVault's straightforward approach," he said. "To see the product in action was just unbelievable when compared to what it took to do the same thing in our current system."

Case Study

Mountain America
Credit Union

Results

Simplified, faster, more comprehensive data protection through EVault now covers all areas of concern (Symitar, Windows servers, VMware environment) while offering excellent encryption and turn-key remote disaster recovery.

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—Travis Rice
IT Systems Manager,
Mountain America
Credit Union

Rice credits EVault Professional Services with providing “one of the smoothest implementations we have been through in a long time.” He added that the professional services team “was extremely knowledgeable and performed an exceptional job at implementing EVault into our environment,” while also helping the credit union with disaster recovery planning and testing.

Today, Mountain America backs up its critical data to two EVault disk-based vaults. One resides at the credit union’s headquarters, the other at an off-site disaster-recovery location many miles away. Symitar data and VMware-based data are included in the backup—with minimal fuss or extra work involved. “EVault’s VMware plug-in was another of the key drivers for us,” noted Rice. “It allows us to reliably back up both the VMDKs and the VMware servers themselves at both locations.” Symitar data no longer relies on tape-based backup. Instead, it is replicated quickly and easily “across the wire” to the disaster recovery site.

EVault has proved a good way to fill the gaps Carsey saw in replication and failover using their old approach. With end-to-end encryption that’s easy to implement, Carsey and Rice are happy with the assurance that their Symitar backup data is encrypted when it leaves the AIX host, and remains encrypted in storage.

Results

Carsey said, “When the NCUA auditors come in this year, we can say ‘yes’ to a lot more things than we could last year. We’ll have a pretty comprehensive backup and DR solution whereas last year, we didn’t. It means a lot less stress, especially with the NCUA auditors. The bigger we get, the more they expect you to do. EVault is going to help us out enormously.”

Rice also reports a smoother process in protecting Mountain America’s virtual server environment. He’s confident in the credit union’s ability to recover quickly, even in an extreme disaster. “In a disaster situation, whether this building’s gone or one VM is corrupted from a virus, I can now restore the entire virtual machine with EVault and be back up and running about 20–30 minutes later,” Rice said.

EVault support is also a welcome change from the old days. “It’s been a night-and-day difference from our experience with other vendors,” said Rice. “Whether someone comes on the premises or works with us over the phone, everyone’s been extremely responsive to any of our issues and they really know the product.”

Take the Next Step

To learn about EVault backup and recovery services, call us at 1.877.901.DATA (3282), email us at concierge@evault.com, or visit us at www.evault.com.



Headquarters | 3101 Jay Street, Suite 110 | Santa Clara, CA 95054 | 877.901.DATA (3282) | www.evault.com
Netherlands (EMEA HQ) +31 (0) 73 648 1400 | **France** +33 (0) 1 55 27 35 24 | **UK** +44 (0) 1932 445 370

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2011.12.0036_CS (updated 01/10/2012)