



Leveraging Microsoft's DPM for Efficient Backup and Disaster Recovery Solutions

CPS realizes greater data integrity and effective protection with DPM

A leading oilfield services provider, Complete Production Services (CPS) supplies all-inclusive well production solutions to the world's largest oil and gas companies. With seven divisions throughout the United States, Canada and Mexico, CPS is supported by onsite IT staff that provide local individual PC support, and a centralized information technology (IT) group which handles all infrastructure, applications and data.

With all of its data hosted in corporate data centers in Houston and Calgary, CPS' infrastructure contains more than 90 servers, necessitating an efficient back-up solution. In the past, the IT group relied upon Symantec's Backup Exec which had worked well, but was now proving unable to handle some of the load without decreasing enterprise efficiencies. "The problem we had was that a full backup in the Houston data center would take 36 hours," said Mike Pate, CPS IT director. "It could only be done over the weekend because while the server was getting backed up it would slow down so much that it was really hard for anyone to work on it. And, if there was any problem whatsoever we'd have to re-fire a complete backup on Monday, creating a huge problem. We were also doing incremental backups every night that took six hours—a very tight timeframe."

To remedy these issues Pate looked into the logical next step of upgrading Backup Exec to Symantec's Netbackup product. He quickly found though that the architecture wasn't going to be able to meet CPS' needs, so he began to research an alternative solution. "As a fluke I went to a Microsoft seminar on System Center Data Protection Manager (DPM) for a disaster recovery solution," shared Pate. "It blew me away. I found that DPM was not only a good solution for our disaster recovery needs, but it could also replace Backup Exec for our day-to-day backup needs."

A New Approach

Armed with a new solution Pate engaged a consulting firm to help implement DPM. "We very quickly realized that this relationship was not going to work out so we let them go and made contact with Catapult Systems," said Pate. "We felt Catapult was the right company to provide the expertise we needed on installation, training and knowledge transfer of DPM." Working together, Catapult and the IT team quickly implemented a new DPM environment, complete with replication of protected DPM data from the abandoned initial installation to a disaster recovery site. Servers that were protected by both Backup Exec and the old DPM implementation were migrated to the new DPM system.

"It was an eye-opener to see how both consulting companies approached the project and worked on it," shared Pate. In hindsight I made a mistake. Catapult's level of professionalism, and more importantly, project approach was refreshing. It was highly organized, designed and planned out versus the other approach which was to ask me 20 questions followed by 'give me access to the server'. Catapult knew that once the project was over they were leaving, so knowledge transfer was really important to us. All throughout the project, their approach was 'tell me what you're trying to do and we'll teach you how', which is exactly what we wanted. They also had weekly meetings where they would give us a project status document, not just a verbal update. I could track the project and see where we were on tasks and cost, which made my life so much easier."

Today, DPM provides reliable data protection of CPS' production servers. Data is further protected by replication to their disaster recovery DPM server, which was tested early on when the primary DPM server failed shortly after implementation due to a faulty

motherboard. Protection was quickly rolled over to the disaster recovery DPM server making archival backups readily available for data recovery.

The IT team is now getting closer to true continuous data protection. Backups are gone, replaced with real-time data replication, while backups to tape are performed against a replica of the protected data on the DPM server. This has removed the impact to the production server, eliminating the concept of a backup window. "It's been a real paradigm shift for us," said Pate. "The full tape backup happens on a non-production server which means that if there's a problem we can fire it back up with no impact on the users. And, it's a much easier system to maintain because now we can have daily, weekly and disaster recovery backups all managed from a centralized point – the care and feeding of the system is substantially less."

CPS has also realized greater data integrity. According to Pate in the past there were times were they could only recover data to a certain point. Now recoveries are a lot faster, and when the team does do data restores it's become a rare occurrence when they have to pull tapes. "We can now keep 14 days online," stated Pate. "Users usually realize the problem seven days or so into it; now we can literally begin the restore process in minutes."

Additional Benefits

Another added benefit that the team has experienced is the flexibility of adding additional servers. "The scaling that DPM offers us has been priceless," shared Pate. "If my current back-up server gets overwhelmed I can easily add another server but still have it managed under a central console. Data Protection Manager cost

me as much as the Symantec upgrade, but with Netbackup it was very unwieldy to add another backup server. Since DPM was built as an integrated solution I don't have that problem now."

The team has also seen a substantial return on investment with regard to tape storage. "Our tape storage has dropped dramatically saving us thousands of dollars," said Pate. "We've eliminated daily tape backup and now only use the tapes once a week and offsite for archival purposes, which has significantly reduced wear and tear on our tape library. That was an unknown benefit."



How can we help you?

Contact us at 1-800-528-6248 or info@CatapultSystems.com