



CUSTOMER
SUCCESS



University of Georgia gets lesson: NetVault™ makes the grade in power, ease of use

FAST FACTS

Challenge

Time & cost efficient system that can accommodate its changing needs given their planned expansion

Application

SGI Origin 2000 System

Solution

NetVault 6.03 teamed with two Exabyte LTO drives

Operating System

FreeBSD

"The best products are those that can meet your immediate requirements, as well as scale to meet tomorrow's. Our experience with NetVault shows that it is that kind of product. We're very satisfied."

—Corey Doster, Network Manager at the Georgia Center.

The Company

As the focal point of The University of Georgia's continuing education efforts, the Georgia Center for Continuing Education annually serves more than 200,000 people through on-campus, off-campus, distance education programs, and through various support services.

The Center opened in 1957 with funding from the W.K. Kellogg Foundation (through a 1953 grant) and the State of Georgia, was the second of the "Kellogg Centers," the first opening at Michigan State University in 1951. Today, there are 13 such centers, ten in the U.S., and one in Costa Rica, Great Britain, and Honduras. In 1984, the Foundation awarded UGA a second grant, part of which was earmarked for programs at the Georgia Center. The grant was matched by the State of Georgia to renovate and expand the Center's complex to its present-day configuration.

As the continuing education arm of The University of Georgia's teaching, research, and service components, the Georgia Center fulfills its mission through award-winning credit and non-credit programs and courses. Faculty members from across the UGA campus are sought out and integrated into the program development process; consequently, the Georgia Center brings to bear potentially all disciplines of the University in meeting the lifelong learning needs of Georgia's adult citizens.

Housed under the Center's roof today are two auditoriums (one seating 400, the other 600), 24 meeting rooms, two executive conference rooms, 200 hotel rooms (lodging for up to 400 people), three computer training labs, audio and video production facilities, equipment for video teleconference uplinks, an instructional studio providing two-way video connections to electronic classrooms statewide, a public radio station, and support areas. The facilities comprise almost 300,000 square feet, and the Georgia Center employs more than 600 full- and part-time faculty and staff.

The Challenge

Like many institutions and businesses, The Georgia Center found its data storage load rapidly increasing, with financial information and emails centrally stored on its SGI Origin 2000 system, with a Clariion storage array attached to it. "We were using another application and scripts to backup and restore our information, but they were very difficult to run," says Corey Doster, Network Manager at the Georgia Center.

"We had a library directly attached to the SGI system, and if we wanted to back up any of our data, it had to be housed on that machine," Doster says. "We had to copy files to the Origin system to back them up. Backup and restore processes took far too long as well; we'd have to wait 30 or 40 minutes to retrieve an individual file. When we had to restore information, we had to manually find the tape, find the file on it, and then configure the software to retrieve it. And when the backup or restore was finished, we'd have to manually unload the tape. The system was neither time- nor cost-effective."

Doster knew that the Center's plans to upgrade its system would present more challenges under the existing configuration. The Center was migrating its computer network to run on the FreeBSD operating system, because of its

stability and ability to easily perform updates. They were also planning to implement Oracle database applications to take the place of its homegrown financial application. Most importantly, Doster's team planned to move from direct-attached storage to a network storage topology, with the addition of two Network Appliance® filers running on Gigabit Ethernet.

The existing backup/restore software was simply not workable, given the Center's planned expansion. Doster needed a more powerful solution that incorporated advanced functionality, like NDMP support for network-attached storage, as well as a solution that would enable them to handle the data easily and quickly.

The Solution: NetVault

The Georgia Center evaluated several companies' backup/restore software, before choosing BakBone Software's NetVault. "It was extremely easy to install and get running," Doster says. "We had it fully installed and were conducting our first backup test within 15 to 20 minutes." He found that tuning NetVault to meet the Center's specific needs took about a day, far less time than required by other backup/restore software. "I was comfortable with the software after a day. Sitting down with the manual and seeing how it works is quite doable in that time frame, and that says a lot. That kind of time is trivial, when you consider what the software means to your ability to save information."

"We have purchased two Exabyte LTO drives to meet our growing needs. NetVault supports those drives out of the box. So as we attempt to shorten our backup windows, even as we increase the amount of data we're storing, we know that NetVault will handle the load easily, without complication or frustration."

Doster also found NetVault's point-and-click interface to be a major time-saver. "I want a solution that will back up my data reliably and be easy for anybody to use. There are four of us who interact with the software. It can't be so complicated that someone else can't set it up

and get it rolling. It can't take four weeks of training to learn how to use the software. Sit them down one time; show them how to do it. With NetVault, it's that easy; we spend half the time we did with our previous software teaching people how to use it, and then they're good to go."

BakBone's technical support proved to be another source of happiness for Doster. "I had a question, and had a response back within two hours. We worked out the issue the same day. That's one of the beauties of NetVault: we haven't had to rely on technical support, because it works. It does what it does, and has made our life much simpler. Now our biggest delay in restore jobs is simply loading the tape. Our average time to restore information has been reduced to between two and three minutes."

Overall, Doster says NetVault has proven itself to be a worthy investment. "We are clearly getting our money's worth. I am now 100% confident of our ability to recover our data in case of a disaster," he says. "It's hard to put a price tag on peace of mind."

The Future

As the Georgia Center for Continuing Education continues to grow, its plans call for it to double its immediate data storage capacity, and triple it in the near-term, to a terabyte of information. Its plans to install Oracle financial applications will present a new set of challenges.

Fortunately, NetVault will be able to solve those challenges easily. With its modular architecture and Application Plugin Modules (APMs™) for today's most popular databases, the Center will be able to quickly configure its storage system to accommodate its changing needs.

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