

SEPATON

CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

Cambridge Health prescribes SEPATON for critical data backup



The Cambridge Health Alliance is an innovative, award-winning health system serving residents of the Boston-area communities of Cambridge, Somerville, Everett, and Revere. Centered on three hospital campuses, Cambridge Health Alliance comprises more than 20 primary care practices and sponsors a range of innovative public health programs focused on improving the health and wellness of the communities it serves.

THE CHALLENGE

For Cambridge Health Alliance, patient data is critical to patient care. Even business applications like email are essential to helping clinicians treat patients. Losing data—or even delaying access to it—can impact the quality of care. And that's not acceptable.

To protect its data, Cambridge Health Alliance had invested in a tape library system that it thought would meet their needs for five years. According to Systems Operations Manager Daniel Doherty, it didn't work out that way.

"Not only was it underpowered, but we had all the typical tape library pitfalls, including expensive tape costs, tape failures and slow backup times," Doherty says. "It finally got to the point where we were running backups around the clock. If we had to do a restore or take the backup system down for maintenance, it was virtually impossible."

When the tape library was prematurely "sunsetting" by the manufacturer, Doherty reviewed his alternatives, including buying another tape library—an option he wasn't enthusiastic about, given his experience.

THE SEPATON® SOLUTION

Then Doherty heard about SEPATON's disk-based Virtual Tape Library (VTL) technology and dug deeper.

"The more we looked at SEPATON's VTL solution, the more we liked what we saw," he says. "It looked like an ideal fit, offering speed and performance at an attractive price."

Doherty noted that his investigation revealed some competing VTL solutions based on different technologies. "But I read a number of articles that reviewed SEPATON's ContentAware™ virtual tape architecture compared to some of the vendors, and they were very favorable toward the SEPATON approach."

Following an impressive, on-site demonstration, Cambridge Health Alliance purchased an S2100-ES2 Virtual Tape Library.

TROUBLE-FREE IMPLEMENTATION

Implementing the S2100-ES2 at Cambridge Health Alliance was easy, according to Doherty.

"The S2100® was up and running in a matter of minutes, and we were performing backups in our live environment within a couple of hours," Doherty says, noting that he configured the S2100 as a single tape library with 10 virtual drives, 400 virtual tape slots with 40TB of total capacity. He said configuring the S2100 to meet his needs was simple, using the graphical S2100 Management Console.

From the standpoint of his backup software, Doherty says the transition from a tape library to the S2100 was seamless. “Our CommVault software saw the SEPATON unit just like any other tape library. It took no special configuration whatsoever,” he says.

The physical tape library is now primarily devoted to generating auxiliary backups, run off the S2100 after the nightly backup is complete, for off-site secure storage.

HEALTHY RESULTS

Taking a cautious approach, Doherty says he ran the S2100 VTL and his old tape library side-by-side initially, alternating backup chores from one to the other.

“After a couple of days, we had a good, apples-to-apples comparison, and the performance of the S2100 was excellent,” Doherty says, noting that on the faster servers in his environment, the S2100 performed backups 400% faster than his old tape library.

This dramatic acceleration in backup time means Cambridge Health Alliance now completes its nightly backup of all critical systems before the start of business each day—despite significant growth in data since the S2100 was installed. With about 20% of backups still performed on the physical tape library, Doherty notes that backup performance will be even better once all nightly backups are shifted to the S2100.

Another critical benefit is a newfound ability to complete auxiliary tape backups for off-site storage. Because the tape library had been running around the clock, this task often was not accomplished prior to the S2100’s arrival.

“With the S2100, that problem is solved,” Doherty says. “Our physical tape library now has plenty of idle time, so our auxiliary backups are completed each day.”

Restore performance is also dramatically improved with the S2100. Because the physical tapes are stored about a city block away, Doherty says restoring from tape could take an hour or more, just to recover a single file. “With the S2100, we can now do a restore in a couple of minutes,” he says.

With the disk-based S2100, overnight tape failures are a thing of the past. In fact, Doherty says the S2100 has been trouble-free.

“We carefully monitor the data center checking for problems or warning lights. There’s never a concern on the S2100,” Doherty says, noting that the graphical S2100 Management Console provides him with real-time updates on system health and performance.

Doherty says that, unlike his sunsetted tape library, the S2100 offers plenty of room to grow to keep pace with growing backup needs.

“We can easily add more virtual tape drives or slots, or add more storage capacity whenever we need it,” Doherty says, noting that he is also considering enhancing the S2100’s capabilities with SEPATON’s Data Compression and Synthetic Full Backup applications in the future.

In the final analysis, Doherty says the SEPATON S2100 Virtual Tape Library has lived up to his expectations, and then some.

“What I thought it would do, it has done 100%. And I think there’s even more that we can get out of it in the coming months,” he says. “We’re really happy with the S2100.”

To learn more about the complete family of SEPATON data protection products, visit us at www.sepaton.com

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