Florida Law Firm Cuts Backup Time, Ensures 100% System Availability and Stands Up to Hurricane Wilma

Ruden McClosky

Customer Profile
Company Profile
Industry: Legal
Organization: Ruden McClosky
Fort Lauderdale Data Center
Revenue: Approx $100 million
Employees: 200 attorneys; 500 employees

Business Impact Summary

Business:
Ruden McClosky is a full-service law firm with 10 offices throughout Florida. With clients both domestic and international, the firm provides a complete range of legal services and business solutions across a broad scope of cases and clients. With a staff of 500, including 200 attorneys, it is one of the largest and most prestigious firms in Florida.

Challenge:
Because Ruden McClosky practices in one of the most volatile weather regions in the United States, IT officials at the firm recognized the need for a reliable disaster recovery plan. The firm also saw the opportunity to consolidate infrastructure and improve WAN communications across its networked locations.

Solution:
A recovery management solution was implemented that included the establishment of a secondary data center in Chicago, which now serves as the firm's failover site. In addition, dynamic data replication is conducted 24/7/365 with the help of WAN acceleration technology from CA partner Riverbed Technology.

Result:
Not only does Ruden McClosky today enjoy an average WAN capacity increase of 460%, but the recovery management program that the firm implemented was able to provide 100% data and system availability during one of Florida's worst recent storms – Hurricane Wilma. In fact, according to officials, business never missed a beat.

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Transforming
IT Management

Business

Leading Florida Law Firm Leverages Technology to Set Itself Apart

Ruden McClosky is a full-service law firm, providing a complete range of legal services and business solutions for clients throughout Florida, the United States, Latin America and beyond. One of the state's largest and most respected firms, Ruden McClosky has over 500 employees, including 200 attorneys, across 10 Florida locations. Areas of practice include banking and finance, health law, real estate, intellectual property law, litigation and general corporate law.

An avid believer in the value of technology, the organization has leveraged leading IT systems to great business and client advantage. For example, Ruden McClosky is at the industry forefront in implementing a replication and failover solution for its current financial systems. These are complex applications that enable law firms to more effectively track time against cases and to bill hours accurately in order to maintain a reliable flow of revenue.

Challenge

Managing Risk in One of the Country's Most Volatile Weather Regions

Risk management is a huge concern for the firm. With its primary data center located in Florida, one of the country's hotbeds for extreme weather, Ruden McClosky's IT team recognized the firm's vulnerability. The ability to ensure system and information availability in the event of a disaster was a must. Ben Weinberger, Director of IT, noted, "We saw some real gaps in how we were, and were not, protecting the firm's data, and how we were providing access to that data. We wanted to seal those gaps."

Weinberger explained that throughout the duration of any case or client matter, courts and regulatory entities apply strict filing timelines and no-miss deadlines. In turn, the firm's attorneys rely on his IT team to ensure complete system availability around-the-clock – to information, files, email, everything – no matter the challenge or circumstance. If attorneys can't access the information they need, the firm faces the possibility of missing these crucial deadlines. "This is a massive risk issue," said Weinberger, "because it opens the potential for financial liability as well as malpractice."

The firm also wanted to gain greater efficiencies in its day-to-day backup operations. With over 50 Windows-based servers and 600 workstations spread across 10 offices, and over 600 email accounts, there was a lot to backup. The then-current procedure involved a time-intensive backup-to-tape process that moved slowly across a point-to-point hub-and-spoke network that linked the offices. All told, each backup took more than 30 hours to perform, and this was an untenable situation.

Weinberger noted that, "we were looking for a complete consolidation and replication solution that would, of course, provide reliable recovery and high availability management as well, in the case of a Florida hurricane."

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Ben Weinberger,
Director of IT

Solution

Consolidation, Replication & WAN Acceleration — Saving Money While Protecting Case-Critical Information

After an intensive search within the consolidation and replication technology marketplace, and after several demonstrations of similar but ultimately inadequate technologies, Weinberger's team selected CA XOsoft™ High Availability – one of CA's Recovery Management solutions, combined with Steelhead appliances from Riverbed. CA's product provides comprehensive data replication and failover functionality to securely manage and protect data resources, while also helping to optimize storage infrastructures, while Riverbed's Steelhead appliances ensure that replication is completed as fast as possible.

Consolidation & Replication

To complement the software acquisition, a new and fully meshed MPLS WAN architecture was installed to connect the firm's 10 Florida-based locations. As well, a secondary failover data center was established in their Chicago co-location facility, which now serves as the firm's new disaster recovery site. With this solution in place, the IT team performs backups at a fraction of the time it had taken before. They now conduct dynamic replication around-the-clock to ensure system availability and uptime, day and night, and provide on-demand data recovery. "We were also able to consolidate two separate Microsoft Exchange (email) servers (each of which stored approximately 250GB of data) down to one," said Weinberger, "which now provides email services firm-wide. So, even capital expenditures and licensing fees are down."

With increased traffic now flowing all day, all the time, the team knew the network would be taxed.

WAN Acceleration

"I read an article on WAN acceleration one day," said Weinberger, "which led me to find Riverbed Technology." Riverbed offers a technology called a Steelhead appliance. When these appliances are installed at both endpoints of a network, they dramatically compress and accelerate WAN traffic to provide exceptional performance gains. Said Alan Saldich, vice president, product marketing & alliances for Riverbed: "Our solution yields efficiencies for Ruden McClosky in three key ways: by reducing WAN traffic and eliminating storage redundancy; by accelerating all TCP-based applications; and by specifically optimizing many applications that weren't originally designed for WAN use." The combination of all three techniques adds up to major performance gains.

Celso Mosquera, Financial Systems Manager for Ruden McClosky, remembers the day the team tested the product. "Riverbed sent us two appliances for a free 30-day eval. They came pre-configured for two of our sites, Fort Lauderdale and St. Petersburg. We put them in, we turned them on and, practically within minutes, the traffic was cut in half. Applications running from our other regional locations over the WAN now felt like they were running locally." Ruden McClosky today enjoys an average capacity increase of 460% over a non-Riverbed accelerated WAN architecture.

CA and Riverbed have successfully collaborated on several such applications, and the Ruden McClosky IT team confirms that the two technologies mesh well together. Adds Mosquera, "The Steelhead appliance also allows us to turn off the compression functionality in CA XOsoft, freeing up more server overhead, which lets us perform more important tasks."

The backup window was reduced from 30 hours to approximately 6 hours. And, after the storm, each office reported 100% uptime with no disruptions.

Result

Preparation & Protection Through Recovery Management Also Protects the Bottom Line

Because Ruden McClosky needed to implement a disaster recovery plan to provide data protection and availability across all 10 of its networked offices, the firm implemented a comprehensive recovery management solution. Today, Ruden McClosky is fully prepared to withstand the region's extreme weather events and more.

Day-to-day, the performance results that Ruden McClosky experiences are significant and tangible:

- A reliable recovery management solution is now in place to protect mission-critical information, boosting both attorney and client trust and confidence
- The backup window was reduced from 30 hours to approximately 6 hours – a tremendous savings in time and resources
- Dynamic system replication enables server rollback for on-demand file and document recovery, supporting attorneys and ensuring client service
- WAN acceleration speeds up network traffic without having to invest in higher bandwidth connections, saving on communication and infrastructure costs
- Consolidated, centralized, and unified network operations and maintenance has increased productivity and freed up essential resources

But perhaps the most impressive result of all was when Ruden McClosky– and the rest of South and Central Florida – was rocked by Hurricane Wilma and the many perilous tornados that spun out from under her.

"Five of our offices were hardest hit, and they were completely shutdown," remembered Weinberger. "However, business throughout the firm never missed a beat. As we followed the forecast on the news, we were also running tests through Assured Recovery and saw that successful failover was viable and ready – again and again. We felt confident. So, the evening before Wilma hit, we did a complete failover to our Chicago DR site. Then, literally, after the storm had blown over, each office reported 100% uptime with no disruptions – except, of course, those that were in Wilma's direct path, and where area power had been shutdown. Yet, even attorneys who normally worked at those sites were able to logon from home (those that still had power) and work remotely.

"Today, we are very happy with the combined CA XOsoft and Steelhead solution," concluded Weinberger. "We have, in fact, often recommended it to others in our field." "We recently evaluated CA's new r12 Beta Version of XOsoft," added Mosquera, "as well as CA's ARCserve® Backup solution. The tight integration between the two products makes sense for us."

About Riverbed

Riverbed Technology is a provider of enterprise-class wide-area data services (WDS) solutions. They enable application acceleration, IT consolidation, WAN bandwidth optimization, and faster WAN backup – all in a single appliance. www.riverbed.com

CA can help your enterprise realize the full power of IT to achieve your business goals. To learn more, and see how CA software solutions enable other companies to unify and simplify their IT management, visit **ca.com/customers**.

Learn more about how CA can help you transform your business at **ca.com**

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