

NEWCASTLE-UNDER-LYME BOROUGH COUNCIL TURNS TO VIZIONCORE FOR VIRTUAL DISASTER RECOVERY STRATEGY

vizioncore™

THE SITUATION

Having implemented VMware Infrastructure 3, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council determined it required a specialist solution to backup and restore its growing estate of virtual servers.

THE SOLUTION

"We began looking at other options [to VCB] paying particular attention to feedback on advice on virtualisation forums, and saw that Vizioncore was offering a product that delivered exactly the kind of functionality and automation we were after," said Steve Clark, senior server support assistant, Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

THE RESULTS

Using vRanger Pro the Council has built a very effective backup policy around virtual infrastructure and as a result can guarantee a much more effective responsive level of service to the Council's staff.

"Using vRanger Pro we have built a very effective backup policy around our virtual infrastructure. As a result we can guarantee a much more effective and responsive level of service to the Council's staff. If an issue affects any of our virtual machines we can very easily bring the backup version online much faster than we could get a new physical machine up and running." Steve Clark, senior server support assistant at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council.

THE SITUATION

Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council provides services to over 122,000 citizens in Staffordshire. The Council has a total of 650 staff working across a range of departments including Council Tax and Benefits, Planning and Leisure. The ICT team supports these departments by providing a range of email, document imaging and office productivity applications, as well as a number of bespoke and highly specialised department-specific applications.

In 2006 the Council began to implement VMware Infrastructure 3 virtualisation technology in order to reduce its operational expenditure and hardware footprint and to simplify administration and maintenance. During the initial phases of the implementation it became clear to the ICT team that it required a specialist tool to allow it to backup and restore its growing estate of virtual servers.

THE SOLUTION

The council initially looked at VMware Consolidated Backup (VCB), a centralised backup function in VMware Infrastructure 3, but decided this product would not address its particular needs. "We considered using VCB but while this was a perfectly good way of backing up virtual machines the restoration processes were far more complex than we would have liked," said Steve Clark, senior server support assistant at Newcastle-under-Lyme Borough Council. "We began looking at other options, paying particular attention to feedback and advice on virtualisation forums, and saw that Vizioncore was offering a product which delivered exactly the kind of functionality and automation we were after."

Vizioncore vRanger Pro is the recognised industry-standard backup and restore solution designed specifically for virtualized environments. Administrators can schedule regular backups of either the full VM image or just the differential, at appropriate intervals, all while the virtual machine is still running. Images can be stored either locally on the SAN or sent as compressed files over a WAN to remote locations to support disaster recovery strategies. vRanger Pro also enables restore of individual files efficiently with an explorer tree through which users can easily identify and "grab" needed files from within the virtual machine.

THE RESULTS

The council's virtualisation project has seen it consolidate over forty servers onto six VMware Infrastructure 3 host machines, and Vizioncore's vRanger Pro has proven to be a key tool in providing a robust backup and DR strategy for this virtual environment.

vRanger Pro has allowed the Council to tailor its backup and disaster recovery strategy to match the recovery objectives of individual virtual machines. The majority of the Council's virtual machines are application servers that rely on central SQL databases for their data; as these tend to be fairly static systems they are backed up once a week. Other virtual machines, such as niche applications for audit systems, environmental health and electronic payments, rely on proprietary databases. These dynamic applications change regularly and therefore need a more rigorous backup strategy, so the Council performs daily backups on these machines.

All backups performed using vRanger Pro are stored on a HP 2000s NAS device. The council then runs a daily disk-to-tape backup, copying the virtual machine images to a more portable medium which can be taken off-site for disaster recovery purposes. "If an issue affects any of our virtual machines we can do a full restore in around 30 minutes. It wasn't that long ago that a physical server might take us a day to restore following a crash, so vRanger Pro has proved to be extremely valuable."

"Virtualisation delivers a much higher degree of flexibility in terms of the way server environments can be managed," said Clark. "You can treat entire server environments like files, so provided you have the right tools in place you can implement a really comprehensive disaster recovery policy. Using vRanger Pro we have built a very effective backup policy around our virtual infrastructure and as a result can guarantee a much more effective and responsive level of service to the Council's staff."



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