

MCGRAW-HILL EDUCATION EUROPE



Storage beyond the Data Center

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EXPANDING THE REALM OF I.T.

As in many large organizations, McGraw-Hill Education Europe had a history of focusing IT attention on their data center. End users were not a big part of the equation. “People were expected to back up to floppy drives or back up to the network, or use a CD burner. The user was expected to do everything; they were responsible for creating their own backups and making sure that they worked.”

Leaving PC data protection in the hands of end users led to trouble, even when they took the time to back up their data. “A lot of users thought they were backing up. But whether they got a good burn to their CDs or they copied the right files to their floppy or Zip drives was another thing. Or maybe they rolled their chair back over the Zip disk or the copies just couldn’t be found when they were needed.”

Mick Symonds and his IT staff recognized that PC data protection must become the responsibility of IT. “At the end of the day it was an IT issue. We were backing up all the data residing in our back office servers, and we needed to treat laptop and desktop data the same way. If someone lost data, they were wasting IT resources – their disk crashed and then we were taking up our time to try to recover that data, to find old copies and old backup that might have existed six months before.”

Mr. Symonds began the search for a centralized solution that would give IT control over unstructured user data. “I think every IT professional understands the need to back up important data that resides in locations outside their servers. And in my experience, until we looked at Connected, there had never really been anything that so successfully enabled IT to secure desktop and remote-based data in a uniform way.”

TAKING CONTROL OF UNSTRUCTURED DATA

“At first” Mr. Symonds stated, “there was a push from the organization as a whole to say, ‘This issue doesn’t really exist; this is just a nice-to-have. How many times does

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MICK SYMONDS, DIRECTOR OF IT – EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST, AFRICA

someone’s hard disk fail? How many times does someone get his or her machine stolen? How can you actually substantiate the need for a solution like this? Because, until a big crash actually happens to someone who’s seen to be critical to the organization, it is quite difficult to justify.”

There were doubters among the IT staff. “There were people within McGraw-Hill who work within technology saying to me, ‘Oh, I’m not sure that this is the right way to go.’ And I said, ‘Well, let’s get a presentation together and you can air your concerns and view the technology and the type of applications and the way that it’s used elsewhere.’ And in fact, the two people within our organization who were the biggest skeptics were our first two users.”

End users were given vivid demonstrations of the power of Connected data protection. “I did some really brash things when we got the pilot up and running, where I’d go to people’s machines and say, ‘Which of your files are the most critical?’ And then I delete. And as they’re going exceptionally white, I would retrieve the files from the Connected server. We made instant believers with those demonstrations.”

Soon, all of McGraw-Hill’s IT staff recognized the benefits of controlling user data protection. “The beauty of a solution like this is we can set flags and triggers to alert us to the last time each machine was backed up, to ensure that all of our backups are completed every night.”

And it wasn't long before the investment in user data protection started showing returns. "In addition to the peace of mind we've found with data protection, Connected reduces the amount of time it takes for us to build and deploy new machines to existing users. For example, one of our employees opened the overhead locker on a flight and his machine came crashing out. Since we had all of his data backed up, we were able to reinstall all his files in a new machine within an hour."

SECURE STORAGE BEYOND THE DATA CENTER

But the biggest benefit to the organization has been the newfound capacity to store user data – especially email – safely, beyond the data center. "The real godsend with Connected is the ability to effectively secure data outside our file servers and quickly redeploy that data wherever it is needed – for any reason."

Soon after their Connected solution was implemented, the McGraw-Hill IT staff realized that secure local storage allowed them to rethink where user data should reside. "We began pushing user data back out to the desktop. As we deployed Connected, we worked with users, asking, Which of your data do you actually share? Which is your own data that only you work on? And what data is shared within your workgroup? The data that's clearly theirs, such as email, we secure at the desktop."

Securing user data locally, beyond the data center, allows McGraw-Hill to take advantage of the multi-gigabyte hard drives found in today's PCs and laptops. "Having Connected enables us to reliably store data beyond our data center, so our back-end systems don't bear the whole burden. With this solution, we're utilizing all that disk space that we've already paid for. You know, we don't get any discount from HP if we ask them to put smaller hard disks in the machines. So why not put that storage to use?"

Automatic, reliable and secure data protection was the cornerstone of this new storage model. IT had centralized control of what had been unstructured user data. "Without a solution like Connected, I'd be scared to do it. But having Connected in place provides us with peace of mind, makes us feel comfortable with the fact that users have much

more data within their control, because the good thing is, now, we also have control."

EVOLVING ENTERPRISE STORAGE

Mr. Symonds recognizes that explicitly making user data the responsibility of IT requires a change in thinking. "Everyone talks about the enterprise, but then they focus only on the back-end side of it. We try to view the enterprise as a whole and consider every node."

McGraw-Hill's IT managers recognize that taking control of user data may be seen as challenging conventional wisdom on the role of IT. But once the benefits to the organization are considered, expanding the range of IT – while automating backup and simplifying data retrieval – makes perfect sense. "The IT revolution had been pulling data back to the

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data center, and now you're talking about reversing that trend, pushing it out to the desktop. It's an adjustment. But once most people actually see the benefits of having the solution in place, thinking starts to change."

Beyond the benefits of reducing the burden on enterprise servers and protecting PCs, the Connected solution brings peace of mind to Mr. Symonds and his staff by taking what was unstructured and vulnerable company information and putting it under the control of IT. "This Connected solution brought a huge amount of stability to a previously unstable environment, because it secured all the data. And that's the critical thing."

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