

What Customers are saying about Unitrends

Following is a letter, in full context, received from a Unitrends Healthcare customer. Due to internal restrictions, they are unable to allow the use of their name in any external marketing vehicles.

DISASTER RECOVERY PROCEDURE AND OBSERVATIONS FOR THE REGIONAL MEDICAL CENTER

By
Information Systems Director

The following represents actions taken during a computer disaster that the Regional Medical Center (RMC) experienced on March 16th, 2006.

DISASTER:

On March 16th, 2006, RMC experienced a computer-related disaster when the main Domain Controller crashed. Our server was configured with a RAID 5 setup and the RAID controller reported that three of the four hard drives had failed.

ACTIONS:

After determining that repairing was not really an option, RMC immediately purchased a new HP server and had it shipped overnight. I immediately set up a DHCP server and DNS services on one server and seized/transferred the roles from the crashed DC using ntdsutil and ADSIedit to another server. My purpose in using those utilities was to clean Active Directory, remove the crashed server, and install Windows 2003 Server on the new hardware with the crashed server's domain name.

After seizing the roles and getting AD cleaned up, I turned my attention to the restore part of process. I wanted to determine the integrity of the backups. I moved the tape drive (Quantum DLT VS160) to another server. This tape drive is less than a year old and the tapes haven't been used more than a dozen times as we have them on a monthly rotational basis. We use VERITAS 10.0 backup software in conjunction with the tape solution. We had also just recently implemented Unitrends DPU featuring disk-to-disk backup and restore options. I took the tape from the previous night's backup (marked SUCCESSFUL by VERITAS) and, following procedure, successfully inventoried the tape. I then proceeded to catalog the tape but without success. That meant last night's backup was no good. I grabbed the previous night's backup (also marked SUCCESSFUL) and followed the same procedure. Same result as before. The inventory worked but the catalog did not. I thought maybe I was doing something wrong, but a tape I had from almost a month previous inventoried and cataloged successfully. This meant that the two most recent tape backups were no good and who wants to use data from a source that is a month old?

We had implemented the Unitrends Rapid Recovery system in February of 2006 and we weren't familiar with their software or processes. I telephoned Unitrends support prior to testing the tapes and was told that they would call me back. When they called back, I was ready to try their system. We did a master restore to an alternate server, and then followed it up with the previous night's Incremental backup, and everything came over very nicely, including the security settings on each folder. It took a couple of hours to do the Master restore and the Incremental went very quickly (only about 10 minutes). When the server was reinstalled with the Windows 2003 Server Operating System, I redid the entire restore (Master and Incremental) in just about two hours. Again, all the security settings were in place and, once the appropriate folders were shared, people were able to get back to work.

We still have some minor glitches to work out but they aren't related to backed-up data, and overall, our Disaster Recovery plan worked. The appropriate steps were followed and, with the exception of the delay in getting the server to us, things went pretty quickly and smoothly.

OPINIONS:

I've heard it said that 25% of the tape backups fail in some way, shape or form. Even though I only tested three of the 30 that I had, the two most recent tapes HAD failed the restore process, and any administrator will tell you that's not a good thing. I'm now a firm believer in the Unitrends disk-to-disk solution. I feel it allows Hospital IT/IS staff to follow the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) requirements for ensuring a complete recovery of data without the need for redundant servers (which we can't afford) and without the risk of tape failure. Comparing the two backup/recovery options that were available to me, I find that the Unitrends disk-to-disk is the better (by far) solution.

It really helps to document the roles that each server plays in Active Directory. If you need to identify those roles, see the following Microsoft Knowledge Base Article: (<http://support.microsoft.com/kb/234790>)

A good Disaster Recovery plan is essential. Although I don't think it's necessary to have every conceivable option covered, a good basic step-by-step procedure can come in handy. Include in the plan the various roles each server plays, services that run on each server, data (or shared folders), and which servers can assume the various roles in case one of the DC's goes down.

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