

Case Study

Local Bank Strengthens Disaster Recovery Plan

The Background



Hancock County Savings Bank, FSB

For 114 years, Hancock County Savings Bank has served its community by focusing on home ownership and offering premier mortgage lending products. Since its first mortgage loan was processed in 1899, Hancock County Savings Bank (HCSB) has become one of the community's leading lenders.

The Challenge

HCSB's locations consist of a corporate office, two full-service branch offices, and one drive-through office in West Virginia. An experienced, skilled in-house IT staff supports the bank's IT infrastructure, and the bank has also relied on Nortec for years for additional support and consulting.

The bank was faced with the replacement of its dated, legacy hardware. Moreover, HCSB wanted to streamline its backup solution as well as implement a better disaster recovery (DR) solution. HCSB's IT Manager, Kellie Morrow, stated "We did not have a very robust disaster recovery plan, and as the servers continued to age, we felt our data and business as a whole were vulnerable in the event of a server failure."

HCSB had, in fact, delayed upgrading its server equipment because it wanted to have a DR plan in place first. "It would take us 3-5 days to get up and running with the plan we had in place," Morrow explained. However, while in the process of internally researching DR options, critical pieces of equipment became unreliable. Due to the fault tolerant design of Nortec's server infrastructure, the bank was able to continue its operations. Of concern was the time and difficulty to procure the replacement hardware for the obsolete equipment. HCSB knew it needed to act quickly or risk losing vital data. "The timing was right to implement a new DR plan now because it was clear that our hardware needed to be replaced," Morrow says. HCSB looked to Nortec for recommendations.

The Solution

Nortec's approach was to present a big-picture vision, while addressing HCSB's immediate concern of implementing a DR solution. To this end, Nortec designed and implemented a virtualization solution that would run on a well-constructed SAN (Storage Area Network) infrastructure. The implementation was seamless and efficient. Coincidentally, shortly after the deployment, a file server at one of the branch offices began to experience hardware failures over a weekend. Nortec virtualized that server, and as Morrow explained, "By the time employees came back Monday morning; it was as if nothing had happened. They were able to get up and running immediately."

Another hardware issue developed with a cold storage server, so Nortec compressed its original of

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timeframe on getting all of the information moved over to a new virtual machine in a minimal amount of time. “Nortec was able to get everyone moved over very quickly and without any data loss due to the transition,” said Morrow.

With the previous physical servers now running as virtual machines and with SAN replication in place and successfully tested, Nortec began implementing the rest of the vision. The Windows Server 2003 R2 Active Directory was transitioned to Windows Server 2008 R2 Active Directory Domain Services. Moreover, HCSB’s messaging solution was transitioned from Exchange 2003 to Exchange 2010. Equally important, Nortec was able to both streamline and consolidate HCSB’s data backup efforts. Rather than supporting two separate backups performed at two of the offices, HCSB’s data is now centrally backed up at one location. This has not only reduced support with respect to man hours, but the associated licensing costs have been reduced by 50 percent.

As part of the envisioning phase of the overall project, Nortec had proposed consolidating all of the bank’s decentralized databases to a single database server. The bank had been supporting three database servers. Nortec provisioned a new virtual machine with an upgraded backend database server and migrated the respective databases to it, which means the bank will not need as many licenses, providing a long-term savings for the bank.

Keeping downtime to a minimum and the impact to its employees low were also priorities for HCSB. Nortec worked with HCSB during evenings, nights, and on weekends in order to help meet these business requirements. “We completed a lot of off-hours work and Nortec accomplished a lot in the background, but because of this, the users’ impact was minimal,” said Morrow.

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The Benefits

Using virtualization and replication between the bank’s branches and the disaster recovery branch, HCSB will now be up in a matter of a few hours, rather than days, should a disaster strike.

Other benefits include an improvement in network performance due to the new servers. In addition, the time the bank’s IT department spends backing up systems prior to an upgrade has been significantly reduced. “We would spend two or three hours backing up a specific folder prior to an upgrade. Now, by employing snapshots, it’s just a matter of minutes, if not seconds,” said Morrow.

Morrow also has peace of mind. She added, “It’s a really good feeling to know our data is secure, accessible, and safe should we ever need it – even in non-disaster situations. If something happens, we know we have what we need to get back up and running so that we can serve our customers.”

For more information on Nortec, please contact us at georgeh@nortec.com.