

Company Profile: Hide-Away Storage is a leader in the Florida self-storage industry with 10 facilities throughout the west coast of Florida's.

Website: www.hideawaystorage.com

Business Challenge: With 10 self-storage facilities spread across the west coast of Florida, Hide-Away Storage needed a reliable data protection solution that would allow much of the company's self-service products to run seamlessly and independently on the edge of the network with little on-site maintenance or continuous monitoring. The failure of these applications would seriously impact customers' ability to access storage units, sign up for new services or pay their bill—major detriments to quality customer service, especially in a self-service business model.

Solution: Hide-Away Storage deployed a disk-based data protection solution from Kaseya, leveraging a new Backup and Disaster Recovery (BU/DR) module in its existing IT management solution. Through the integrated and complete solution, administrators are able to remotely monitor, maintain, update, secure and now back up all servers and workstations on the network from a central management console. This proactive strategy allows systems on the edge of the network to be quickly and reliably restored in case of an outage—guaranteeing 24x7 access to its facilities and the availability of its services to customers.

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Self-Storage Company Protects Distributed Data through Kaseya Backup and Disaster Recovery Solution

Hide-Away Storage operates 10 traditional self-service storage facilities throughout the west coast of Florida, providing state-of-the-art climate control and traditional storage units featuring security that protect customers' personal property from environmental damage and theft. As a 24x7 business, Hide-Away Storage must provide complete access to its storage facilities for its customers, ensuring that security measures are put in place and traffic in and out of each facility is closely monitored and regulated.

In addition to providing on-site staff during business hours, a key component to this service is an electronic gate that controls traffic in and out of each facility at night and on Sundays. Passcodes are stored in a local database that needs to be secured and made highly available. At the same time, Hide-Away Storage's point of sale application, called Total Recall, provides basic retail services at each facility—including unit availability and allocation, billing and other customer services. The software is centralized in the company's Sarasota, Fla., data center and needs to be accessed seamlessly by managers across the region over a secure, reliable connection. If the software is unavailable or access to customer data is unreliable, operations at each facility could come to a halt, preventing sales from being processed and inconveniencing customers.

However, the 24x7 services that Hide-Away Storage provides customers has led to IT complexity, requiring a distributed IT environment that is spread across 11 sites over 150 miles of Florida coastline. Guaranteeing data protection of this critical database and customer information is vital to business continuity and the overall health of the business. However, the company's three-man IT staff simply doesn't have the time or resources to conduct continuous on-site maintenance and reliable nightly backups at each facility.

"It's impossible to be everywhere at once, and it isn't practical to drive between facilities. We'd spend all our time in the car instead of working on IT issues," said Todd Williams, network administrator, Hide-Away Storage. "As a result, even the most simple system outage or data loss could result in a full day of downtime—a death blow to a company that touts 24x7 access to its storage facilities."

Existing Tape Backup Solution was Insufficient

Hide-Away Storage's existing tape backup solution wasn't making it any easier. The HP tape library solution powered by Computer Associates ArcServe required hands-on loading and unloading of tape, eliminating the possibility of nightly backups in the remote facilities. In the data center, the nightly backups took all night and, due to healthy business growth, eventually outgrew a single tape. Often, Williams would arrive in the morning and have to switch out the tape, letting the backup process to run well into the day—a practice that drew bandwidth and server capacity away from business systems.

Recoveries were even worse. Failed servers and workstations had to be restored manually on site over the course of several days, taking a facility or application offline for an extended period of time.

"Tape just wasn't providing the performance, reliability or ease of use we needed to ensure a robust data protection strategy for our business," Williams said. "It also neglected to back up data out on the edge of the network, leaving us vulnerable to losing critical customer information."

Efficient, Reliable Disk-Base Backup Solution

In an effort to enable remote backups and make the process more efficient, Hide-Away Storage replaced its tape solution with a disk-based data protection strategy from Kaseya, leveraging a new Backup and Disaster Recovery (BU/DR) module in its existing IT automation solution. By integrating remote disk backups with the Kaseya management framework, administrators have the ability to monitor, maintain, update, secure and now back up any server or workstation from a single, Web-based management console.

This integrated and proactive approach to IT management ensures that Hide-Away Storage is able to protect all corporate and customer data—regardless of where the data resides, even on the edge of the network. As a result of the more reliable backup strategy, the company's point of sale application and the secure gateway that regulates traffic in and out of its facilities are available 24x7.

"The Kaseya backup solution is not only more reliable, more efficient and easier to manage than our old tape backup system, but it's safe to say that we wouldn't have been able to protect all of the customer data out on the edge of the network."

The Kaseya BU/DR module is provided through a strategic partnership with Acronis. The company's Acronis True Image family of disk-based backup solutions leverages powerful incremental and compression technology to reduce the physical amount of data backed up each night, easing bandwidth requirements and dramatically shorting the backup cycle. The low-footprint agent backs up six Intel-based servers in the Sarasota data center as well as 10 workstations deployed in the company's remote facilities. These workstations provide reliable access to vital customer data stored centrally in the data center and operate the local gateway system that regulates traffic in and out of the facility. Williams also uses the backup module to conduct Exchange backups, folder backups of corporate files (human resources, accounting, accounts payable, etc.) and backups of executive laptops.

"The key to a successful backup and disaster recovery plan is being able to restore the backup to any hardware, be it physical or virtual," said Stephen Lawton, senior director of strategic marketing at Acronis. "The Kaseya BU/DR module, which incorporates Acronis Universal Restore, ensures that Hide-Away Storage's data can be moved, managed and maintained on any server, even dissimilar hardware, should the need arise, providing the bare minimum of downtime."

As a result of the compression technology and incremental strategy, the Hide-Away Storage corporate network—consisting of 5 TBs of storage—is backed up each night in less than two hours and can be restored to any snapshot in time. Kaseya then migrates the data each week to an off-site disaster recovery facility to protect the company from a loss of its data center or regional disaster.

"The integrated Kaseya IT automation framework enables us to implement a preventative, proactive IT management strategy throughout our environment," Williams said. "Our old tape backup solution was indicative of an out-dated break-fix model that was inefficient, didn't provide the level of service we needed and really limited the impact IT had on the business."

Key Benefits

- Incremental backups are completed every night with full backups conducted weekly, ensuring that all data is fully protected and can be recovered
- Fast recoveries and remote bare metal restore capability reduces downtime associated with system outages, improving application availability
- Proactive IT management strategy provides consistent service levels throughout the organization while automating maintenance
- Disk-based backups are more reliable and more cost-efficient, reducing hands-on administration and eliminating tape expenditures
- The efficiencies of the Kaseya solution enable Hide-Away to outsource its IT operations to other local businesses, bringing in additional revenue

"Kaseya allows us to recover downed systems quickly and extend the same robust data protection and IT management services that our corporate offices enjoy to the remote facilities."

— Todd Williams, network administrator, Hide-Away Storage

Availability Enables Customer Access

The more efficient and reliable Kaseya backup solution gives Hide-Away Storage the ability to protect all corporate and customer data—a major upgrade over its previous limited data protection strategy. If a system goes down or data needs to be recovered, an administrator can conduct a bare metal restore of any server or executive laptop, rebuilding the system from the operating system and applications to installed drivers and network settings in less than an hour.

"Employees who twiddle their thumbs are not productive employees, so we need to make sure that IT does everything in our power to ensure access to business tools and reliable customer data," Williams said. "Kaseya allows us to recover downed systems quickly and extend the same robust data protection and IT management services that our corporate offices enjoy to the remote facilities."

As a result, customers have reliable access to their storage units—regardless of the time of the day or week—and can conduct business with the local facility manager, including renting a new unit, extending a contract or paying their bill. On the operations side, Kaseya makes the IT staff much more efficient, helping to streamline IT maintenance and eliminate much of the repetition associated with administration. Kaseya's alerting features enable a more automatic and hands-off management strategy, providing transparency throughout the distributed environment and acting as the eyes and ears of the IT staff.

The efficiencies of the Kaseya solution are so great that Hide-Away Storage is able to outsource its IT operations to other local businesses, helping to diversify the business and bring in additional revenue. Recently one of these clients suffered an outage of a server running AutoCAD. Through the Kaseya BU/DR module, Williams was able to use the bare metal Universal Restore feature to reboot the server software on a workstation—a temporary solution that got employees back up and running quickly. Restoring to the workstation, setting up a new licensing file to activate AutoCAD, configuring the Exchange Mail Server, along with the network took only a few hours. Williams was then able to do a bare metal restore on a new server when it arrived several days later—again, in a few hours over the weekend with little impact on business continuity or employee productivity.

About Kaseya

Kaseya is a global provider of IT automation software for IT Solution Providers and Public and Private Sector IT organizations. Kaseya's IT Automation Framework allows IT Professionals to proactively monitor, manage and maintain distributed IT infrastructure remotely, easily and efficiently with one integrated Web based platform. Kaseya's technology is licensed on over three million machines worldwide.