



"We have addressed the twin challenges of explosive data growth and limited storage capacity with a single, powerful solution. The FalconStor VTL Storage Appliance integrated easily and seamlessly into our existing infrastructure, and its deduplication capabilities gave us the ability to address all of our business continuity issues in one swing."

– Chris Watkis, IT Director, Grey Healthcare Group

Grey Healthcare Group

Grey Healthcare Group leverages FalconStor VTL with deduplication to improve backup and recovery performance, optimize storage assets, and strengthen data security.

Background

Grey Healthcare Group (GHG) specializes in advertising, education, and interactive marketing for the medical and pharmaceutical industry. Companies turn to GHG for integrated strategies that harness the power of the Internet to generate awareness, enhance brand identity, and drive growth worldwide. Its services range from medical animation and video to online community management. Since memory-intensive media that captures creative intellectual property is the company's most critical asset, it is imperative that data be protected with high-performance backup and recovery.

Challenge

GHG works with clients worldwide to develop multi-channel marketing and advertising campaigns. These creative offerings, which include video, photography, and online services, produce large media files that need to be protected and continually available. Many digital media files exceed 2GB in size, so as the business grew, the amount of data requiring protection nearly doubled, challenging the capacity and performance capabilities of the storage architecture.

"Our tape library was at its maximum capacity, and even with 8TB on our SAN, we wanted more storage to protect our work," says Chris Watkis, IT Director. With finite space on each tape and backup processes running at set speeds, the time required for routine backups and restores continued to increase, jeopardizing data availability and integrity. Adds Watkis, "We were seeing an equation of escalating investment with diminishing returns."

Backup reliability was another huge concern for the IT group. To guarantee that a full, up-to-date restore could be performed, three weeks of tape had to be collected. The tape library itself required almost daily troubleshooting, utilizing man-hours and cutting into the IT budget. "Robotic failures, stuck tapes, bad tapes, bad connections – these were very real concerns for our administrators," says Watkis.



Industry

Marketing Services, Healthcare

Company Profile

Grey Healthcare Group is one of the world's top five healthcare communications companies. Headquartered in New York, its global network includes 43 companies in 22 countries. GHG has an extensive array of integrated multichannel digital and traditional marketing services in support of brand acceleration and sales, including: advertising and e-marketing, digital and off-line medical education, and medical illustration.

IT Environment

- > 20+ Dell, HP, Apple servers
- > 40TB data
- > EqualLogic storage unit
- > 13TB SAN
- > SpectraLogic LT04 tape library
- > 12 IT personnel

Challenges

- > Long tape restore windows
- > Growing data sets; limited storage capacity
- > Risk of media failure, incomplete backups
- > Troubleshooting consumed IT manpower
- > Large bandwidth requirements for offsite DR

FalconStor Solution

FalconStor® VTL Storage Appliance with embedded data deduplication

Benefits

- > Fast, reliable backups ensure continuity
- > RTO lowered from several days to under 1 day
- > Optimized storage capacity reduces hardware requirements, costs
- > Minimized IT troubleshooting
- > Compliance with health industry guidelines
- > Reduced bandwidth needs and associated costs for DR

If a system failure were to occur, it would take several days to restore data from the tape library. In an effort to eliminate downtime and the resulting business impact, GHG revised its storage strategy by establishing a lower recovery time objective (RTO) and upgrading its storage architecture.

FalconStor Solution

GHG explored solutions from numerous vendors; it chose the FalconStor® Virtual Tape Library (VTL) Storage Appliance with integrated deduplication based on key performance advantages and a superior customer service model. "The most critical selling point for us was the promise of vastly improved restore times, facilitated by disk-based protection," says Watkis. "We saw how FalconStor VTL could deliver business continuity by optimizing our storage capacity and ensuring viable backups."

In addition, FalconStor VTL stood out for its flexibility in environments – an important advantage. It offered easy integration with existing storage resources, including the Macintosh applications heavily favored by GHG's graphic artists. "Other vendors' solutions put limits on file size and structure, Watkis adds. "That was a huge drawback for us, with our corporate dollar earned in multi-channel media."

Other key factors were FalconStor's maintenance response times and warranty contract. With the FalconStor VTL server designed to communicate directly to FalconStor Support in the event of a problem, the GHG IT team felt confident in its ability to quickly resolve issues and maintain data availability.

Deployment Details

GHG worked with VirtuIT to implement the FalconStor VTL Storage Appliance with embedded deduplication. Now backups are done directly to disk using a backup server connected to the appliance. FalconStor deduplication technology eliminates redundant data and compresses unique data, reducing GHG's data sets for backup from 175TB to 2TB -- a ratio of more than 75:1. "This was quite eye-opening," Watkis begins. "It made us aware of just how many duplicate files were being backed up and re-backed up by the previous system."

With FalconStor VTL and deduplication, GHG can schedule deduplication to run after the backup completes or concurrently with backup. In the concurrent process, deduplication runs with backup after the first write to virtual tape completes. Neither process impacts the backup window.

Most importantly, with the FalconStor VTL Storage Appliance in place, online storage capacity is virtually unlimited, and IT can

perform reliable restores of data anywhere on the network within its predefined window. The performance advantages of FalconStor VTL have produced myriad benefits – shrinking the backup window, increasing storage efficiencies, and reducing administrative workloads -- but above all, it has given Watkis' team a business continuity plan they can implement with confidence.

Business Benefits

Watkis estimates that GHG has saved thousands of dollars in new hardware purchases by virtualizing its storage environment, and the FalconStor solution has saved his staff time that might otherwise have been spent remedying the media and mechanical failures associated with tape. In addition to these major cost savings, the most critical advantage of FalconStor VTL Storage Appliance has been the airtight reliability of its high-performance backups and restores, and the ability of the IT staff to recover mission-critical information within a single business day.

"Optimizing our storage environment has enabled IT to deliver on the promise of round-the-clock data availability and integrity," states Watkis. "In this sense, we serve as a key driver of business continuity and growth." Watkis is also extremely pleased with how easily the FalconStor VTL Storage Appliance integrates into GHG's environment. Its scalability and flexibility in backing up mixed files has enabled it to adapt to the unique nature of the company's products and services.

Lastly, the encryption capability of FalconStor VTL has made it easier for GHG to maintain compliance with healthcare privacy guidelines. "We needed a way to safeguard sensitive data from research and focus groups," Watkis explains. By exporting data from the FalconStor VTL Storage Appliance to physical tapes in an encrypted format, he can ensure that this data is protected from interception and unauthorized access. This protection will become even more essential when the IT staff implements its future disaster recovery (DR) plan for offsite replication.

Future Plans

The IT team plans to implement offsite DR in the coming year, utilizing the FalconStor VTL Storage Appliance to perform remote replication over a WAN. Deduplication of stored data will minimize the amount of data transferred, sharply reducing bandwidth needs and associated costs.

While the FalconStor VTL Storage Appliance is currently deployed in the main data center, the company's corporate parent is investigating the possibility of implementing FalconStor VTL and other FalconStor solutions into its offices throughout the world.

For more information, visit www.falconstor.com or contact your local FalconStor representative.

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