



"By utilizing virtual storage technology, we are able to reach a new level of disaster preparedness while minimizing the cost of managing and maintaining the DR site."

Darren Kruk, IT Operations Manager, Safeguard

Safeguard Properties

The largest privately held field services company in the U.S. leverages FalconStor® NSS to host over 100Tb of disk storage, for powerful virtualization and fast, reliable data recovery

Background

Safeguard Properties is a trusted leader in default property management. Founded in 1990, Safeguard has grown from a regional preservation company with several employees and contractors, to a national company with hundreds of employees. Safeguard is supported by a nationwide network of subcontractors, as well as numerous ancillary services. Its clients range from local loan servicing companies to national publicly held mortgage servicing corporations, all of whom depend on Safeguard for stellar customer service.

Challenge

Due to a rise in home foreclosures throughout the U.S., Safeguard has been busier than ever, experiencing rapid data growth and high demand on its storage infrastructure. Capacity requirements have escalated at a phenomenal pace, increasing by approximately 500% over two years. Much of the data includes documentation needed to meet the compliance issues of Safeguard's customer base – as much as 500,000 new photographs and documents per week. "We needed a solution that would scale rapidly and meet tight recovery time objectives," explains Safeguard CIO Michael Manley, adding that he anticipates storage needs to grow more than 40% in the coming year.

Manley recalls: "We had a great deal of documentation routing through our Microsoft Exchange servers, and when the servers went down, it crippled our business for several days and forced us to take immediate action."

FalconStor Solution

Desperate to get back up and running, Manley and his team contacted Chi Corporation, a leading enterprise storage solution provider, for assistance. "Cost and responsiveness were huge factors," says Manley. "We needed to get a solution in quickly, and get it up, live, and working." Time was critical. Safeguard considered solutions from EMC and FalconStor, and with Chi's assistance, chose FalconStor technology for its ease of implementation, speed of recovery, and cost-effectiveness.



Industry

Insurance, Real Estate

Company Profile

Safeguard Properties is the largest privately held field services company in the U.S. Safeguard is supported by a nationwide network of subcontractors able to perform any requested superintendence, preservation, and maintenance functions, as well as numerous ancillary services in the U.S., the Virgin Islands, and Puerto Rico.

IT Environment

- > Heterogeneous appliances including JetStor devices
- > Microsoft Exchange Server
- > Hitachi SAN
- > Fibre Channel (FC) and iSCSI

Challenges

- > Increasingly stringent compliance regulations
- > 500% increase in storage requirements within 2 years
- > Additional anticipated data growth of 40%
- > 500,000 new documents to store and manage each week

FalconStor Solution

FalconStor® Network Storage Server (NSS)

Benefits

- > Reduced overhead including management, maintenance, heat, and power costs
- > Scalable solution supports data growth, enables vendor flexibility
- > Reliable storage, fast recovery with 100% transactional integrity
- > Maintain high service levels and tight RPO/RTO
- > Maximum ROI from existing storage investments

Safeguard chose FalconStor® Network Storage Server (NSS) to host the data stores, along with the FalconStor TimeMark® Snapshot option and application-aware FalconStor Snapshot Agents. "FalconStor NSS provides cutting edge DR and business continuity capabilities in demanding storage environments," said Chi Vice President Greg Knieriemen. "This makes it the ideal solution for Safeguard."

These tools became part of an overall enterprise storage strategy focused on scalability and tight recovery time objectives (RTO). FalconStor NSS mirrors data both locally and remotely between the company's primary data center near Cleveland, OH and its disaster recovery (DR) site. At the data center, Safeguard employs disk virtualization utilizing heterogeneous storage devices. FalconStor NSS enables Safeguard to leverage virtual servers and virtual disk technologies.

Benefits

"By utilizing virtual storage technology, we are able to create a new level of disaster preparedness while minimizing the cost of managing and maintaining the DR site," says Darren Kruk, IT Operations Manager. FalconStor NSS allows Safeguard to apply a tiered storage model to both applications and server architectures. "This mix of virtualization technology allows us to replicate not only data, but entire servers, in near real-time to the DR site," Kruk adds. "This eliminates the need for patch management and reduces the overhead associated with the change control process."

As a result of virtualization, Safeguard has been able to reduce management and maintenance costs as well as heat, power, and other costs associated with its co-location DR site. Safeguard can now provision and replicate entire server farms and applications while maintaining vendor independence and leveraging existing hardware investments. "Because everything is virtualized on disk, we only need to turn our equipment on if a disaster occurs," says Kruk.

In the event of a system failure or a major disaster, Safeguard can easily recover mission-critical applications in minutes, rather than days, with 100% transactional integrity. Manley recalls a recent incident in which Safeguard lost several disk stores, and was able to recover data in minutes thanks to the TimeMark option and Snapshot Agents. "Recovery time is 15 minutes at the most now," he says. Because of the success rate of the solution, Safeguard now uses FalconStor NSS for all of its critical applications.

Other benefits for Safeguard include the use of FalconStor snapshot technology for the purposes of application development, performance testing, and forensics support. "If we need to refer back to data for any reason, we can mount a snapshot on a different server without interrupting the rest of our activities," explains Manley. "It has been phenomenal for us."

Future Plans

Manley states, "We are all pleased with how the solution works and continues to work." He is confident that the solution's scalability, flexibility, and vendor neutrality will allow the company to continue to evolve its storage infrastructure to meet the needs of an ever-changing economy and real estate market.

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