

The Situs Companies



Customer Snapshot

Name

The Situs Companies

Overview

Commercial real estate consulting and services

Headquarters

Houston, Texas

EVault Products

EVault Plug-n-Protect; EVault Offsite Replication Service; EVault Remote Disaster Recovery Service; EVault System Restore; EVault agents/plugin-ins for Microsoft Windows, Microsoft SQL Server, Microsoft Exchange, and VMware

Challenges

- Multi-day tape backup windows too unwieldy
- Decentralized tape backups too difficult to manage, retrieve and restore

Cloud-Based Replication and Disaster Recovery Ensure Business as Usual

Situs relies on its EVault® solution—an EVault all-in-one appliance combined with cloud-based replication and hosted disaster recovery services—to restore critical loan processing systems in well under 24 hours, even in the wake of a hurricane. The company also shaved days off its former tape-based weekly backups and reduced nightly backups from hours to minutes.

Reassessing Data Backup After a Hurricane Scare

Since 1985, Situs has built a global reputation for quickly and reliably managing commercial real estate loans. Thanks to its due diligence in the primary and special servicing of billions of dollars in commercial mortgage loan assets, Situs is a respected consultant to both the financial services and real estate communities.

According to Bill McCown, Situs Director of Global Information Technology, the company's ongoing success depends on keeping its e-mail and loan servicing applications (respectively, Microsoft Exchange and Cassiopae) up and running. "Our loan servicing group depends on Cassiopae to process loan payments and move cash around," says McCown. "If we miss that system, we have compliance issues in the service-level agreements with our clients. How well the systems are protected, and how well they can be recovered, also impact the ratings Situs receives from agencies such as Standard & Poor's, Moody's, and Fitch Ratings."

The criticality of its systems became apparent in the wake of 2008's Hurricane Ike. Situs' Houston-based home offices were shut down without electricity for days, and a temporary VPN had to be implemented so workers could remotely access systems. The company's local data center was unaffected but McCown shuddered to think what would happen if it, too, was put out of commission.

"If we had to recover that whole data center based on the backup tapes we had, we couldn't have done it," says McCown. "All of Houston was shut down. No one was getting in or out. There was no communication, no way to recall tapes offsite, no way to provision hardware. We would have been in real bad shape."

Case Study

The Situs Companies

Goals

- Combine local disk backups with cloud services for remote replication and recovery
- Offload disaster recovery to an outside party and streamline the process

Results

- Slashed weekly backup window from days to hours
- Reduced backup management time from several hours to 20 minutes
- Cut file recovery to minutes instead of hours or days
- Obtained peace of mind knowing key systems will be restored quickly after a disaster

“I feel a lot better about future hurricanes than I did. If needed, I know i365 can bring up the entire core of all our important systems in less than a day.”

—Bill McCown
Director of Global
Information Technology
The Situs Companies

Evaluating Disk-Based Backup and Remote Recovery Solutions and Vendors

McCown knew he needed to overhaul the Situs backup and recovery process. He wanted a vendor who could replace his tape system with fast, disk-based backup while also providing more streamlined remote disaster recovery. “I wanted recovery services off my plate if it came to that,” he says. “There’s too much on my plate to handle recovery as well, based on the size of my IT organization.”

McCown’s three-person IT infrastructure team currently oversees nearly 100 physical and virtual servers. The Microsoft Windows shop supports several tiered applications built on VMware, Citrix, Oracle, and Microsoft SQL Server. These include Microsoft Exchange, Cassiopae, and Microsoft Dynamics SL/Solomon, the company’s general ledger application.

McCown’s search led him to EVault, which soon topped his list. McCown especially liked the EVault Plug-n-Protect appliance. Incorporating EVault Software, the appliance could perform nightly and weekly backups in a fraction of the time it took the firm’s 10–15 backup tape devices. McCown also liked that the appliance could be readily paired with the cloud-based EVault Offsite Replication Service and hosted EVault Remote Disaster Recovery Service.

From Financing to Implementation: EVault Customer Service to the Rescue

McCown is especially impressed with EVault customer service. He was initially concerned that Situs might not be able afford the EVault solution. Then an i365 sales representative offered a creative financing alternative that allowed Situs to move forward. Implementation also went smoothly. “Any issue we encountered, they would just come back the next day with a solution,” McCown says. “There was never anything they couldn’t fix quickly.”

Ultra-Fast Backups + Reduced Management Requirements = Peace of Mind

McCown now enjoys the speed of EVault disk-based backups. Instead of almost 2.5 days to complete a weekly tape backup, EVault software completes the job in just 6–8 hours. Nightly backups now take minutes instead of hours. Backup management time has also decreased dramatically. “My guy used to spend half his day managing backups,” says McCown. “He now spends twenty minutes.”

Today, EVault protects about 5 TB of data housed on 30 servers. Ten servers are critical enough to warrant protection via EVault Remote Disaster Recovery Service and Offsite Replication Service. This server subset includes Cassiopae, Exchange 2007 e-mail servers, Citrix servers and Microsoft Windows Domain Controllers. Situs now has a local disk-based “vault” containing EVault backup data. Key data is also replicated nightly to an offsite vault in the EVault cloud.

In the next emergency, McCown knows he only has to call i365 and their experts will bring Situs’ core systems back into operation from virtual servers in the EVault cloud. Having a third-party annual DR test and report also plays well with Situs clients and the ratings agencies.

Says McCown, “I feel a lot better about future hurricanes than I did. I’ve gotten the DR and insurance off my plate. If needed, I know i365 can bring up the entire core of all our important systems in less than a day.”

Take the Next Step

To learn more about EVault storage solutions, call us at 1.877.901.DATA (3282), email us at conciierge@i365.com, or visit us at www.i365.com.



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