

HEALTHCARE RESIDENTIAL SERVICE COMPANY

Virtual infrastructure and expert support services help healthcare residential services company deliver quality of life



ESSENTIALS

Challenges

- Keep pace with a rapidly growing, geographically distributed business
- Manage growing volumes of data in a dynamic, highly virtualized environment

Solution

- Deploy innovative EMC storage and information management technologies
- Rely on customer support services from EMC Global Services

Key benefits

- EMC Customer Support provides virtualization expertise for fast, effective support
- EMC Data Domain deduplication extends backup retention from seven to 60 days
- EMC RecoverPoint and VMware Site Recovery Manager simplify disaster recovery
- EMC PowerPath/VE automates virtual resource utilization optimization
- Online access to EMC documentation helps answer technical questions
- EMC proactive services monitor equipment and dispatch field service personnel when needed

A fast-growing, faith-based company that provides healthcare and residential services to individuals requiring long-term care, this company seeks to identify and address the physical, social, emotional, and spiritual needs of the whole person. It offers a wide range of amenities and activities that bring enjoyment to every day of life. Founded in 2007, the company has grown rapidly. Today, it manages 16 residences in 11 states—with more planned.

VIRTUAL GROWTH

The director of systems, is one of some 20 people in a workforce of more than 1,600 that keeps the company's information technology up and running. He and his team of systems engineers manage and protect the critical information used in the wide range of applications required for the company's operations, including medical records, resident billing, timekeeping, payroll, prescription management, and more.

To support rapid growth while keeping IT costs low, the company has long pursued an aggressive IT virtualization strategy. "Today our production environment is about 70 percent virtualized," says the director of systems. This virtual environment includes Citrix servers that host virtual desktops and present applications and data to users, and servers that some organizations have been reluctant to try to virtualize. "We've proven that Citrix can run in a virtual environment. So far, our Citrix environment is about 35 percent virtualized," says the director of systems.

At the core of the company's virtual IT environment is a back-end storage environment with about 50 terabytes of production data. The data resides on EMC® CLARiiON® CX4 storage arrays, integrated with EMC Celerra® NS systems, in a unified storage solution. "All of the EMC storage has been very reliable," says the director of systems.

The company runs an SIP server on its Celerra network attached storage (NAS) and uses Celerra IP Replicator to create point-in-time snapshots for recovery. These capabilities enable the company to back up and use its networked storage resources more efficiently while keeping both copy and production data accessible at all times. The team uses EMC PowerPath®/VE software to automate optimization of server, storage, and path utilization in the virtual environment.

"This last year we also introduced EMC RecoverPoint and VMware® Site Recovery Manager technologies into the environment. They have enabled us to completely revamp our disaster recovery plans and scenarios," says the director of systems.

RETENTION: FROM SEVEN DAYS TO 60

One of the biggest challenges the storage management team faces is keeping up with rapid growth in a dynamic virtual environment—especially in terms of having enough backup storage.

In the past year, the company added EMC Data Domain® data deduplication appliances to its storage management. “Our two DD660 systems have been a real blessing as far as saving us backup-to-disk space,” says the director of systems. “We were using about 10 TB of SATA disk on our backup server, and we were only able to retain a week’s worth of data. Once we brought in Data Domain, we were able to jump up to 60 days of retention—and that includes adding in virtual machine backups that we hadn’t been doing.”

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DIRECTOR OF SYSTEMS

Even after exponentially growing the amount of data, the team is now able to retain 60 days of net backup data and seven days of Veeam backup on virtual machines. “We’ve been very impressed with the deduplication ratio, especially as far as SQL databases go,” adds the director of systems. “We use those heavily, and the deduplication of those virtual machines really stands out as impressive.”

CRITICAL SUPPORT CONSIDERATIONS

In addition to EMC technology, the company relies on Premium Support services from EMC Global Services. “Knowing that expert, responsive support is there when needed is important,” says the director of systems. “Everything we have runs on this backend storage. It’s critical. If we have a problem with our EMC products, we have a problem with everything. It’s the foundation for everything we do.”

The director’s experience with EMC goes back about four years. “The support has been great,” he says. “EMC has broad and deep storage and information management expertise in virtualized environments, and very responsive service. Those are the key reasons why we continue to select EMC solutions.”

Between his own experience and the reliability of EMC solutions, the director of systems has not needed to frequently contact EMC support services. “I use the online support tools to find information and download documents when needed. The bottom line is that things are running so smoothly that I don’t need to contact support that often. The important thing is that I know they are there with the right expertise when I do need them.”

EMC technical support did prove valuable recently when the company ran into trouble with its new Data Domain appliance. After the team attempted to go from 60 days to 90 days of retention, the device filled up completely. “We had trouble cleaning it out so that it could be used again,” says the director of services. “We did call EMC for help. The support was excellent and they helped us resolve the issue very quickly.”

PROACTIVE AND EXPERT RESPONSE

The director also values the proactive aspects of support including EMC’s Secure Remote Support (ESRS), which monitors his equipment, lets him know when a component needs to be replaced, and automatically sends an engineer with the part.

“If a hard drive is failing or we need a new controller card or something like that, EMC will contact us and dispatch the field support engineer,” says the director of systems. “The engineers are very fresh and up to date in their knowledge.”

As the director looks forward, he sees the need for more storage capacity and the need to upgrade disk array enclosures (DAEs) as most immediate. “Having added EMC RecoverPoint, Data Domain, and PowerPath/VE this past year, we’re holding steady in terms of new technologies. But I know we’re going to outgrow our DAEs in the next couple of years,” he says.

“For our virtualized environment, it is important for us to work with a vendor who is knowledgeable across a wide range of technologies,” the director of systems adds. “EMC support engineers have the virtualization expertise needed to support us now and in the future. The quality of support services will continue to be a major consideration in future technology decisions. We may not need to use it a lot, but when we do need it, having the right technical expertise and support service there to back us up is critical.”

CONTACT US

To learn more about how EMC products, services, and solutions can help solve your business and IT challenges, contact your local sales representative, or visit us at www.EMC.com.

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