

Applied Innovations Gets Affordable, Easy to Scale Backup for Its Growing Virtual Server Environment

Virtual server backup is becoming a way for managed service providers (MSPs) to differentiate their offerings. Using R1Soft CDP, Applied Innovations found it could not only compete, it could win in price and still provide the quality and level of service its clients expected.

Challenges:

- Explosive growth in number of virtual servers
- Existing backup solution taking too long to backup virtual servers
- Significant upfront investment required for new backup solution
- Most virtual server backup software intended only for use with VMware

Solution:

R1Soft Continuous Data Protection® 3.0
Enterprise Edition

Benefits:

- Quick to setup and deploy
- Nominal upfront investment
- Optimized for Microsoft Windows Hyper-V backups
- Scale R1Soft CDP as new virtual server backup clients added
- Sized to backup 120 - 150 virtual servers per R1Soft CDP server

Overview

The virtual server growth that Applied Innovations was experiencing was real but the pain that Chief Systems Architect Wayne Lansdowne felt was also real. His existing backup solution was not optimized for virtual server backups and the alternative backup solutions he evaluated did not economically scale. It was only after finding R1Soft CDP 3.0 Enterprise Edition that he found backup software that could scale as his virtual server backup demands dictated, at a price that enabled Applied Innovations to remain competitive as a hosting provider.

Company:

Applied Innovations Corp.

Website:

<http://www.appliedi.net>

Location: Boca Raton FL

Industry: Managed Hosting Services

Founded: 1999

Profile:

Applied Innovations specializes in hosting on the Windows Server platform. Its goal is to provide technology and resources that small and medium sized businesses require to make them competitive and successful in the online marketplace as a cost effective price. Applied Innovations provides shared hosting, reseller hosting, Virtual Private Server (VPS) hosting, dedicated hosting and application hosting services with thousands of businesses worldwide daily relying on it for their hosting needs.

“Applied Innovations did not have to make a large initial investment to deploy R1Soft CDP, whereas other providers expected us to buy their backup solution and hope the customers would come. Using R1Soft CDP, we could incrementally scale our backup infrastructure as our virtual server backup business grew”

- Wayne Lansdowne, Chief Systems Architect, Applied Innovations

The Growing Pains of Virtual Server Data Protection

Applied Innovations was growing in ways that could not be easily seen but Chief Systems Architect Wayne Lansdowne felt its growing pains. From the time that Applied Innovation started offering Hyper-V Cloud Server hosting service to its customers a little over two years ago, the company experienced what he could describe only as “explosive growth.”

This put Applied Innovations in a bit of a bind. Its existing backup software solution worked well when doing backups of applications hosted on physical servers. But it was not a good fit for Applied Innovations’ rapidly growing VPS hosting environment as it would take 6 – 10 hours to backup a server. This was far too long for it to be an effective long-term solution.

A Leap Too Far

To remedy the situation, Applied Innovations began to evaluate competing backup solutions, as well as consider an upgrade to its existing Symantec Backup Exec backup software; however, it found that all of the solutions reviewed required a significant upfront investment. Moreover, they did not scale well.

What Lansdowne wanted was a solution that enabled him to start small and then add on more hardware and software as his backup demands dictated. But the backup software solutions presented to Applied Innovations had to be configured to protect thousands of clients from the outset. That put Applied Innovations in a position where it had to buy first and then hope it could attract sufficient customers to pay for the backup solution.

This approach was too great a leap of faith for Lansdowne. Applied Innovations did not by default include backup services with its Hyper-V Cloud Server hosting solution and Lansdowne was not in a position where he could afford to build out a solution and then hope customers would utilize it.

Further, he already knew that some customers were not really interested in backing up the virtual servers they were hosting with Applied Innovations. The combination of the upfront investment plus the uncertainty as to how many customers would actually take advantage of these backup services prompted Lansdowne to expand his search to identify a backup solution that better matched the needs of Applied Innovations.

Applied Innovations’ R1Soft CDP Server Configuration/Charges:

CDP Operating System:
Microsoft Windows Server 2008
R2 64-bit

CDP Server Total Storage:
15 TBs per CDP Server

CDP Storage Configuration:
15 Drives

CDP RAID Configuration:
RAID 50

Agents per CDP Server:
~120

Backup Service Charge:
\$40/server per month;
40 GBs of storage

Wherever We Go, R1Soft is There

As a regular attendee at conferences and trade shows, Lansdowne often saw R1Soft at these events but did not know much about the company or its Continuous Data Protection (CDP) 3.0 Enterprise Edition backup software. Being in the market for backup software, he approached R1Soft to discuss Applied Innovations' specific needs.

He found R1Soft willing to sit down, discuss and really understand his needs. R1Soft allowed Applied Innovations to try its CDP software and verify that was a good fit before asking Applied Innovations to make a buying decision.

As Applied Innovations tested R1Soft CDP, Lansdowne grew very impressed with how quickly it backed up his virtual servers. The existing solution would take hours to complete a backup.

R1Soft CDP simply examined the blocks of data that had changed since the prior backup, which in part entails using Microsoft Windows Volume Shadow Copy (VSS) service. Since Applied Innovations is a 100% Microsoft Windows Hyper-V shop as well as a Microsoft Gold Partner, CDP's tight integration with Microsoft Windows platforms was important.

R1Soft's backup technique enabled Applied Innovations to reduce backup times for the majority of its servers to 60 minutes or less. In the case of virtual server backup, Lansdowne found that backup times were reduced to five minutes or less.

Equally important to Lansdowne, R1Soft's support was always easy to contact and willing to provide hands-on, quality support. Lansdowne viewed this as critical in his

selection of a backup software solution. He says, "If you are having a problem backing up or restoring data, the customer expects support to be there and you need to have a reliable partner to provide that service."

Perhaps what finally convinced him to go with R1Soft was the willingness of R1Soft's vice president, David Wartell, to get involved. On several occasions, Lansdowne spoke directly with Wartell about Applied Innovations' needs. Following their conversations, Wartell took steps to address those needs. Adds Lansdowne, *"I cannot imagine doing that with CommVault, Symantec or some other backup provider."*

It was this total commitment by R1Soft to be there whenever Applied Innovations needed it that convinced Lansdowne to deploy R1Soft CDP in his environment.

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A Testament to How Well R1Soft CDP Scales

Applied Innovations has now been using R1Soft CDP for about a year. CDP's proven ability to scale to fit Applied Innovations' backup environment is clear confirmation that Lansdowne made the right choice. As he predicted, Applied Innovations' customers are slowly but surely adopting CDP backup services; the number of virtual servers being protected by R1Soft has grown to about 100 over the past year.

But more importantly from Lansdowne's perspective, he has been able to protect all of those virtual servers with a single R1Soft CDP server. He anticipates being able to protect another 20 or so virtual servers with that same R1Soft CDP server before he has to add another one to his environment.

CDP's flexible architecture will continue to be an asset well into the future. Applied Innovations hosts over 2,000 virtual servers; Lansdowne expects that someday, Applied Innovations may backup the majority of those virtual servers as customers take advantage of its R1Soft CDP backup offering.

R1Soft's ability to incrementally scale by adding more CDP servers as business demands dictate allows Lansdowne keep his upfront and ongoing costs under control while still giving him the freedom to grow Applied Innovations' backup business in a way that makes sense.

In a Race to the Bottom, R1Soft Gives Applied Innovations a Decided Edge

Lansdowne recognizes that the world of managed hosting services has become a race to the bottom, where customers can get hosting services for virtual servers at almost unfathomably low prices. But he also recognizes that such low cost plans often do not include the quality of service and support that customers expect, and almost certainly do not include backup services.

Using R1Soft, Applied Innovations finds it can offer to its clients a very reliable backup offering that provides the quality and levels of support that they need while still being affordable. Lansdowne concludes, "Backup for Applied Innovations and its clients really comes down to price, stability and speed and R1Soft CDP has been able to deliver on all three of these fronts."

R1Soft is the developer of Continuous Data Protection® (CDP), scalable and high-performance backup software for Windows and Linux servers in the cloud. Recognized as the leading commercial backup software in hosted services, R1Soft CDP is currently used by over 1,000 cloud infrastructure providers and protects more than 200,000 servers worldwide. R1Soft is a division of BBS Technologies.



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