



Company: rackAID, LLC.
 Website: <http://www.rackaid.com>
 Location: 221 N. Hogan Street #308,
 Jacksonville, FL, 32202

Industry: Managed Hosting Services
 Founded: 2006

Challenges:

New demands to frequently and quickly backup social networking data

Too difficult and time consuming to complete server recoveries

Minimal ability to manage backup performance and reliability

Struggling to effectively backup all data on each server

Solution:

R1Soft Continuous Data Protection

Benefits:

Backup all data on servers at any time

Cost-effectively include backup with its hosting service

Create non-disruptive full service snapshots

Recover snapshots to physical or virtual machines using bare metal restore

Scale R1Soft to meet current and future demands

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rackAID's clients only care that the backup software we use works and is tested. In this business things are going to fail so we have to be confident the backup software works. rackAID has that confidence in R1Soft.”

- Jeff Huckaby, CEO

rackAID Incorporates R1Soft CDP into its Total IT Enablement Hosting Service Strategy

Overview

CEO Jeff Huckaby's goal has always been to make rackAID a business enabler. Yet the backup utility that rackAID used to protect its clients' servers was getting in the way of it meeting that objective. By implementing R1Soft CDP, rackAID took backup and recovery to a new level that demonstrated to its clients its ongoing commitment to IT enablement.

rackAID Profile

rackAID's mission is to make IT easy for small business owners. It takes enterprise-ready technologies, bundles them into monthly subscriptions and delivers them as a simple service so businesses may proactively manage IT and use IT to drive success in business.

IT Enablement is Easier Said than Done

The business philosophy of CEO Jeff Huckaby has always been to make rackAID an “enabler” of doing business. This is why since its inception it has attracted nearly 200 small businesses as clients looking to take advantage of rackAID's hosting services. But meeting these expectations in a hosted environment is often easier said than done.

Some clients run a single application on a single server. Others run applications on a cluster of servers. Yet these and other configurations end up in rackAID's data center and that increases its level of complexity significantly with rackAID still bound to provide the “high touch” levels of service and support that are part of its “IT enablement” pledge.

To accomplish this, rackAID does what every enterprise data center does: it implements an enterprise level infrastructure that uses enterprise level hardware and software. It then keeps this environment as automated, economical and simple to manage as possible. However its backup technology was precluding it from delivering on this ideal.

Linux Backup Utility No Longer Enabling IT

As an all Linux shop, rackAID protected its client by taking advantage of the Linux rsync utility. However this utility had a number of issues that had began to negatively impact rackAID's ability to deliver on IT enablement.

The most pronounced issue was rsync's inability to backup all data on each server. Further, there was no way rackAID could effectively monitor and detect how well rsync was performing or determine if an rsync backup could be reliably restored.

Compounding these issues rackAID's business was continuing to grow. To protect the data of new clients was requiring rackAID IT staff to spend more time writing one-off backup scripts to preserve specific server configuration files.

Now if a catastrophic event (fire, hostile attack, server crash, etc.) was to occur, rackAID could potentially lose all of this work. This could require rackAID to manually rebuild these server configuration files and force its clients to experience long application outages. Yet it was the growing use of social networking on client websites that was becoming its biggest backup challenge. Once historically static, shopping websites were adding support for user contributed comments and reviews that were only stored online. This necessitated regular and frequent backups of this data.

rackAID Sets Backup Criteria and Begins Solution Search

These backup needs led rackAID to initiate a search for backup software that better matched its new requirements. This new solution would need to:

- Be cost-effective
- Centrally manage backups
- Meet these varied new backup requirements
- Provide multiple recovery options
- Reliably complete backups and restores
- Scale to keep pace with rackAID's growing business
- Work across all of the operating system platforms of rackAID's clients

This was more difficult and time consuming than rackAID anticipated. One solution did not support a version of a Linux OS that a rackAID client used. Another lacked a central management console and only ran on a Windows platform. A third was too complex, unwieldy and not very client friendly. Many of the rest could not be cost-effectively used by rackAID in its environment.

“rackAID wanted a solution that would do the job best. This meant it had to be cost-effective, simple to install and manage and worked. I have learned from years in IT that if this combination of variables is in place, the likelihood of the solution working when you needed it most was much improved.”

R1Soft Matches rackAID's Backup Requirements

It was as rackAID continued its search that it came across R1Soft Continuous Data Protection (CDP). R1Soft CDP immediately got rackAID's attention as it was built atop Linux which meant that rackAID, a Red Hat Linux shop, could leverage its existing expertise to manage R1Soft.

R1Soft could also perform backups in any form that rackAID's clients needed – hourly, daily or weekly – and then set different retention periods for each backup based upon each client's service plan.

How R1Soft CDP took snapshots also differed from other solutions. It took non-disruptive full service snapshots of the entire Red Hat Linux operating system to include the root Linux file system. This ensured that any customer-specific configuration files residing on this file system were protected and recoverable giving rackAID a high level of confidence that it could recover from a server crash or quickly roll back to a previous server configuration if a security patch update failed to work.

R1Soft CDP's APIs and central management capabilities also fit well into rackAID's long term plans. While it did not need either of these features right away, rackAID envisioned using R1Soft's APIs to hook into R1soft from its billing and ticketing systems to further drive its own internal business automation. Also, as rackAID grew its hosting service and needed more CDP servers, the centralized management view that R1Soft offered into all CDP Servers was very desirable from a management standpoint.

Yet the feature that ultimately prompted rackAID to move ahead with R1Soft was its Bare Metal Restore. In addition to working with any hardware platform, rackAID

found it could also be used to migrate applications on dedicated hardware to virtual systems and back again. Huckaby states, "Bare Metal Restore is essentially why rackAID bought R1Soft CDP."

rackAID Fire Drills Give Its Clients Peace of Mind

rackAID is now so confident that R1Soft backups work that rackAID offers an optional "Fire Drill" service to its clients. During the "Fire Drill," rackAID clients can see:

- Backups of their servers completing
- How long the backups take
- Resources being temporarily provisioned to restore the application
- Everything on their recovered application server is working

This flexibility to do Fire Drills gives rackAID's customers a new peace of mind that the applications and data they host with rackAID are recoverable and quickly can be made operational.

Huckaby observes, "*rackAID's clients do not care what backup software that we use. They only care that it works and is tested as in this business things are going to fail so we have to be confident the backup software works. rackAID has that confidence in R1Soft.*"

R1Soft CDP Now Part of rackAID's Total IT Enablement Package

IT enablement is how rackAID differentiates itself from its competition in the eyes of its clients. Now going forward as rackAID continues to seek to deliver that functionality, backup and recovery become yet another way for it to demonstrate how it does so.

By using R1Soft CDP to protect and recover the client applications that it hosts, rackAID can dynamically adjust to any client's specific backup and recovery needs. Equally importantly, rackAID can do so in an affordable

manner with a solution that it can internally centrally manage, scale and use to quickly recover its clients' applications.

This from Huckaby's perspective is where the real value of R1Soft lies. He says, "rackAID is not in the business of selling boxes to people. Its goal is provide the right solution to them. Using R1Soft, rackAID is better able to meet that objective."

About R1Soft

R1Soft is the developer of Continuous Data Protection® (CDP) software. Their products offer scalable and high-performance backup software for Windows, Linux, and virtualization. CDP is recognized as the leading commercial backup software in hosted

