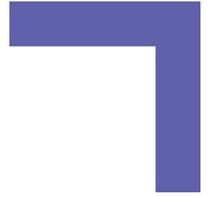


CASE STUDY

First Winthrop



Disaster Recovery:

DOING IT RIGHT WITH HOSTWAY

OVERVIEW

First Winthrop is a property management and real estate organization that has been in business for more than 30 years. The organization has two sides: Winthrop Realty Trust, the branch in charge of buying and selling both commercial and residential real estate, and Winthrop Management, the group's property management firm.

Overall, the company has 40 properties that they manage across the U.S., with the majority of these located in Texas, California and Florida. The firm's 400 employees rely on the services of three individuals in the IT department, including Ed Volmar, First Winthrop's senior systems engineer.

Currently, the company has a Hostway disaster recovery solution in place that Volmar describes as "rock solid." However, it was a much different story for the firm before migrating to its Hostway DR system.

PRIOR TO HOSTWAY: ANCIENT DR INFRASTRUCTURE

Before adopting a Hostway DR solution, First Winthrop utilized its own colocation facility for backup purposes, which leveraged a VMware ESX 3.5 virtual environment consisting of 40 virtual machines. The company's colocation data center, located in Marlborough, Massachusetts, included physical servers as well. The colocation facility also housed its Exchange virtual environment, consisting of about 350 mailboxes in a clustered configuration.

Shortly after arriving at First Winthrop, Volmar came to recognize two serious pain points with this DR system: First was the fact that it was very close to their main office in Boston – only 40 miles separated the two locations. Second, the hardware being utilized within the DR infrastructure was out of date and quickly approaching its end-of-life.

The distance between the Marlborough data center and the company's Boston office was incredibly worrisome for Volmar, as any weather event that impacted its on-premise system in Boston would likely affect its backups at the colocation facility as well. Complicating the organization's DR strategy was First Winthrop's ownership of the hardware in the data center, which necessitated staying close to it to maintain it.

Even more worrisome was the aging machines being utilized, with the newest servers purchased in 2012, and the oldest from 2003.



In the event of a disaster, I don't want to have to roll back to data that's a week old. I want something that's as current as possible. And Hyper-V replica with Hostway allows us to do that.

Ed Volmar,
First Winthrop
Senior systems engineer

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"When I started here about two years ago, our VMware infrastructure was ancient," Volmar said. "And there was no easy way to update it." As a result, First Winthrop began looking at its disaster recovery alternatives, which is when Volmar discovered Hostway.

HOSTWAY: A GOOD FIT

During its search for a new DR solution, Volmar noted that his company was looking for a seamless transition from its previous colocation approach to an arrangement where the vendor would maintain the hardware and First Winthrop would simply foot the bill. The organization was also looking to switch over to a Windows Hyper-V replication system for their DR needs.

"When I did some research, I found Hostway, and I know Hostway is the largest private Hyper-V cloud in the country," Volmar said. "It seemed to be a good fit."

Hostway business development consultant Kevin McCabe learned of First Winthrop's needs, and quickly determined Hostway could provide a DR solution that would enable it to use Hyper-V to replicate its important files to the provider's infrastructure. This way, the organization could run Hyper-V on-premise, and backup its critical materials to Hostway's infrastructure at its data center in Texas.

"They really wanted to make sure they had something in place as a backup should their in-house infrastructure have any issues," McCabe said. "Their office isn't built like a data center, so there is a possibility of having issues with infrastructure on-site."

THE BENEFITS: MOST UP-TO-DATE SAVE POINT POSSIBLE

In the past, First Winthrop was in the habit of doing weekly backups of its important files and data, which were shipped off-site for DR. Volmar knew that this wasn't sufficient.

"In the event of a disaster, I don't want to have to roll back to data that's a week old," Volmar said. "I want something that's as current as possible. And Hyper-V replica with Hostway allows us to do that."

Additionally, Volmar noted that since the company's backups are now housed in Hostway's Texas data center, he and the IT team no longer have to worry about driving to their Marlborough facility to maintain hardware. Hostway takes care of all this for them.

While First Winthrop has not yet had to rely on its Hostway DR solution, McCabe – along with Sean Apodaca, Hostway cloud project manager – agrees that the company is taking the correct approach to DR planning. They now have peace of mind because the solution will be there when they need it.

"They're doing things the right way," McCabe said. "They know the importance of the [DR] solution, and they understand that it's probably just going to sit there idle the majority of the time and not really be used, but should it need to be used, it'll be worth it in the long run for them."