

Greenbrier Turns to DocAve® for SharePoint® Data Protection After Other Products Fail to Deliver

CASE STUDY

Customer Profile

Greenbrier is a leading supplier of transportation equipment and services to the railroad and maritime shipping industries. Headquartered in Lake Oswego, OR, the company builds, leases, repairs, and refurbishes railcars and freight wagons for the North American and European markets. With a lease-fleet of 9,000 railcars and over 130,000 units under management, Greenbrier is one of the largest and most respected rail equipment providers in the world. One of Greenbrier's many subsidiaries, Gunderson Marine LLC, is a leading supplier of ocean-going barges for the North American and Asian markets. Founded in 1919, the Greenbrier family of companies has earned a reputation for quality products, exceptional logistical management, and innovative business practices.

The Challenge

In 2004, Greenbrier deployed SharePoint Portal Server 2003 (SPS) on a small farm consisting of two Front-End Web Servers and one stand-attached SQL Server. Because Greenbrier was in the process of integrating several newly acquired companies, their intent was to use the new platform to streamline communications and facilitate workforce collaboration.

To protect their new deployment, Greenbrier administrators relied on CommVault *Galaxy* to perform backups, which were delivered directly to tape storage. This process – though slow – proved acceptable for their immediate needs. Because Greenbrier deliberately launched their SPS platform progressively - utilizing it originally only as a company intranet and for select document sharing – they could accept the risk of maintaining the relatively large backup windows demanded of this backup routine. Indeed, since the direct-to-tape backups took several hours to execute, they were performed less frequently than administrators had wished. But because the platform did not yet house business-critical information and processes, administrators deemed acceptable the relatively large Recovery Point Objective (defined as the acceptable amount of data loss measured in time). “At the time, our SharePoint deployment wasn’t as integral to our business”, said Fernando Melo, Network Administrator at Greenbrier. “But that didn’t last long.”

“It’s so intuitive.”

Fernando Melo - Network Administrator, Greenbrier



Customer Headquarters

Lake Oswego, Oregon

Industry

Transportation, Manufacturing

Platform

Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007

Critical Needs

A scalable SharePoint backup and recovery solution that delivered fast backup speeds and did not conflict with pre-existing network-wide protection routines

AvePoint Solution

DocAve Backup and Recovery

Results

- Drastically reduced time and resources required for routine backups
- Dramatically increased flexibility of SharePoint content movement and reorganizations
- Conflict-free, scalable, hybrid enterprise-wide protection

In November of 2007, the company upgraded its SharePoint deployment to Microsoft Office SharePoint Server[®] 2007 (MOSS). Immediately following the upgrade, Greenbrier began taking advantage of the business intelligence tools and workflow functionalities built into the platform. Administrators encouraged Greenbrier's over 3700 geographically distributed employees to store their business documents in MOSS, leverage its robust collaboration capabilities, and utilize its user-friendly communication tools. As a result, end-user adoption accelerated across all of the company's business units, and it was not long before the amount of content residing within the platform began growing exponentially. The company's human resource department developed forms integrated with InfoPath to manage employment life-cycles; the marketing department developed and distributed internal newsletters; administrative staff utilized the calendar and scheduling capabilities; and the company's tradespersons used the platform to store and find reference materials, and manage project timelines.

The company's backup strategy, however, no longer proved viable for three important reasons:

First, backups of their growing MOSS content using CommVault *Galaxy* were taking over 72 hours to perform. Administrators determined that – given the increased volume of business-critical information being stored in SharePoint – this level of performance was simply unacceptable. Due to the exceptional rate of growth in platform activity, administrators knew that the problem would only get worse as time passed.

Second, company administrators had plans to expand their deployment architecture to include several remote locations. After administrators analyzed the available options for protecting the anticipated data residing in these new locations, they concluded that the outlays necessary to scale up the current data protection system – including new tape libraries and additional CommVault licensing fees – would prove cost prohibitive.

And finally, the company's administrators had already begun designing a proprietary 'data domain', to serve as an enterprise-wide, redundant data repository. With multiple streams of fiber channels and sophisticated deduping capabilities, this new data domain was being designed to streamline the company's data stewardship and mitigate future IT infrastructure outlays. Because of this initiative, Greenbrier's administrators wanted the ability to perform backups directly to disk, which could then be relayed to the data domain and later backed to tape for off-site storage. From their assessment, Greenbrier's administrators felt that CommVault *Galaxy* was unable to perform such direct-to-disk backups within an acceptable backup window.

Greenbrier's administrators realized the need for a better solution to protect their increasingly mission-critical SharePoint platform.

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The AvePoint[®] Solution

Greenbrier needed a fast, stable, and scalable SharePoint data protection solution capable of backing up directly to disk, and able to seamlessly integrate with both their existing and intended IT infrastructure. After investigating the products available on the market and talking to industry colleagues, Greenbrier decided to test DocAve because of its reputed reliability, its fully-integrated “mix-and-match” modular architecture, its user-friendly “single-pane of glass” interface, and its minimal disruption to the existing IT environment. Greenbrier administrators downloaded a fully-enabled trial version of DocAve from the AvePoint website, and - following a short evaluation period - deployed *DocAve Backup and Recovery* on its production environment.

From the start, Greenbrier administrator’s found the DocAve platform and unified User Interface both intuitive and user-friendly. During the installation and setup process, administrators appreciated the straightforward, elegant architecture of the solution.

“It’s so intuitive”, said Mr. Melo. “The first time I used the software, within thirty minutes I knew exactly where everything was. Compared to the bigger-name backup solutions out there, with hundreds of obscure menu items you have to navigate through, I found the DocAve GUI extremely elegant and functional. For me, that is worth a lot of points.”

Greenbrier administrators scheduled DocAve to run weekly full backups and nightly incremental backups, both targeted directly to disk. Using DocAve, automated pruning policies were established to effectively utilize disk space and preserve one (1) full backup, refreshed weekly. The company continued using CommVault *Galaxy* to perform enterprise-wide backups to tape, but because DocAve executed the MOSS backup to disk, the time necessary for subsequent delivery to tape was drastically reduced. Equally important, because of DocAve’s item-level, granular restoration capabilities, the time required to restore an accidentally deleted or corrupted object was also dramatically reduced.

As a result of DocAve’s implementation, SharePoint backup times were reduced from 72 hours to 26 minutes.

Company administrators also regularly utilized DocAve’s out-of-place restore functionality to move content between their testing, development and production environments. “The out-of-place restore is very convenient”, stated Mr. Melo. “I love that about it...especially that it goes down to the item-level. It has proved extremely beneficial and saved us a lot of time.”

More importantly, the company’s interactions with the AvePoint Support Team were just as positive as its experience with the software itself. “The sales and technical support teams I dealt with were very in tune with what I needed, and I never had to wait”, said Mr. Melo. “The biggest thing that stuck out to me was their eagerness to help out, no matter how big or small of a company you are. I felt they were genuinely interested in helping me out, rather than just trying to fill a quota, like many other tech support teams I’ve dealt with. They would have bent over backwards if I needed them to. But the product is so solid, and I never had a problem. I just installed it, configured it, and it worked. That’s it!”

The Bottom Line

Using *DocAve Backup and Recovery*, Greenbrier is able to protect business-critical SharePoint data with speed, agility, and confidence. No longer burdened with the need to perform time-consuming backups directly to tape, Greenbrier has been able to reduce its recovery times and draft and satisfy more aggressive Service Level Agreements (SLA’s).

Utilizing DocAve's out-of-place restore functionality, Greenbrier administrators are able reorganize data with flexibility and speed, moving SharePoint objects from testing into production quickly and efficiently.

And most importantly, because of DocAve's uniquely scalable architecture and licensing structure, administrators can continue to expand their SharePoint deployment. Greenbrier is currently in the final design phase of its new data domain, and according to Mr. Melo, DocAve will play a vital role in the resulting data protection routines.

Going forward, says Mr. Melo, Greenbrier will always look first to AvePoint for its SharePoint infrastructure management needs. The company's administrators are presently planning to launch remote, replicated farms in select facilities. When these farms are established, Greenbrier expects to test DocAve *Replicator* to meet its farm-synchronization needs. As the time and energy required to manage its enterprise-wide deployment increases, the company expects to utilize DocAve *SharePoint Administrator* because of its unsurpassed ability to centrally manage content, securities, and configuration tasks.

"AvePoint will definitely be the first place we look for solutions in the future", concluded Mr. Melo.

About AvePoint

Since 2001, AvePoint has been a global leader in enterprise-strength infrastructure management software solutions for all Microsoft SharePoint Products and Technologies. Propelled by one of the world's largest SharePoint-exclusive development teams outside of Microsoft, AvePoint's award-winning DocAve software delivers comprehensive and flexible infrastructure support for backup and recovery, replication, migration, administration, archiving and compliance solutions for Microsoft SharePoint.

AvePoint's globally recognized pioneering technology pilots the products of OEM partners such as NetApp and IBM. Headquartered in Jersey City, NJ, AvePoint serves over 3000 enterprise customers, including many Fortune-500 companies, across 6 continents, via offices in Jersey City, San Jose, Chicago, Washington D.C., USA; London, UK; Melbourne, Australia; Tokyo, Japan; and Changchun, Dalian, China. AvePoint is a Managed Gold Certified Microsoft Partner and GSA Certified Provider.

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