

Social Security Administration Deploys DocAve to Protect Mission-Critical SharePoint Deployment

CASE STUDY

Success Highlights

- Reduced backup times by 50% and backup execution failures by 100%
- Significantly cut resource and time requirements for data restores
- Increased user adoption and IT staff efficiency, a requisite in preparation for agency-wide deployment expansion

Customer Profile

Created by the landmark Social Security Act of 1935, the Social Security Administration (SSA) is an independent agency of the United States government tasked with delivering financial and other benefits to qualified American retirees and their families. With headquarters in Baltimore M.D., SSA's Office of Telecommunications and Systems Operations (SSA OTSO) serves as steward of all networking infrastructure and intra-agency digital collaboration platforms in support of over 60,000 agency employees, distributed across multiple regional offices and embassies.

The Challenge

The SSA deployed its pilot SharePoint deployment in early 2008, as the precursor to a more robust deployment expected to follow in 1-2 years. The environment, consisting of SharePoint and Project Server farms designated for specific deployments, was made accessible to all agency staff in April 2008. "Almost immediately, our end users began leveraging the platform", said Shadeed Eleazer, Senior SharePoint Engineer at SSA OTSA. "Various working groups and business units throughout the agency began building Team Sites and uploading assets, and soon we had over a terabyte of data."

Upon implementation, SSA administrators relied upon SharePoint's STSADM command line tool for backups, and SQL Server backups for disaster recovery. But this strategy soon proved unsuitable for two key reasons. "The main issue was the time required to restore a single document", commented Eleazer. "If the right person loses the wrong document, it can cause serious trouble for my team if we are unable to get it back quickly."

"DocAve has made my [IT] team's work much more efficient."

Shadeed Eleazer – Senior SharePoint Engineer, SSA OTSA



Customer Location

Baltimore, M.D.

Industry

Government

Platform

- Microsoft Windows SharePoint Services, V3
- Microsoft Office SharePoint Server 2007
- Project Server 2007
- Pilot Farm: 3 front end Web Servers; 1 SQL Server
- Server Hosting Farm: 2 front end Web Servers; 1 SQL Server
- MOSS 2007 Pilot Farm: 1 front end Web Server; 1 SQL Server
- 60,000+ End-Users; 1 TB Data

Critical Needs

- Resource and time efficient backup functionality
- Item-level, full-fidelity, in and out-of-place data restoration capabilities
- Browser-based data protection solution interface, to enable efficient collaboration among distributed IT administrative teams
- Ability to backup and restore both SharePoint and Project Server instances

AvePoint Solution

DocAve Backup and Recovery

A second major concern involved the integrity of the backups themselves. “Our environment requires 24-hour access to the intranet. Due to the fact that we had multiple end users accessing the site collections while our scheduled backups were taking place, the backup jobs had a higher probability of being corrupted without a single isolated point of failure”, said Eleazer. “As the demand for solid reliability on data increased, it became apparent that we needed to solidify our backup and restoration process, which led us through a rigorous evaluation process.”

The AvePoint® Solution

After evaluating several backup solutions, SSA administrators chose AvePoint because of its ability to:

- ▲ Perform backups at the item-level with full fidelity;
- ▲ Perform restoration both in-place and out-of-place, from both DocAve and SQL backups;
- ▲ Be controlled via a browser-based user interface, from any workstation with an Internet connection

SSA Administrators found DocAve easy and fast to install and configure, and soon had it running regular backups of their SharePoint data. “The GUI is intuitive, everything is where you need it to be, and it offers a clear path to every function you want to perform.”

Immediately, backup times were reduced by 50% and backup failures were reduced to zero.

Within a week of initial deployment, DocAve 4.5 was put to the test as SSA administrators fielded a request for restoration of several mission-critical management documents. “We had the document back in seconds – representing a 95% time and resource savings over our previous method,” said Eleazer.

The fact that DocAve interface is browser-based was critical to the SSA, as the organization’s full scale implementation would be dispersed between data centers based in different US cities. The SSA SharePoint support staff maintained separate working areas with the primary responsibility of triaging Help Desk calls for the intranet.

“With DocAve, when an email requesting restoration comes in, I can delegate the job to any one of my team members, regardless of where they are. It has made my team’s work much more efficient.”

DocAve has proved a vital tool since its deployment. “When you’re doing 3 to 4 item-level restores each day, you want the ability to restore quickly and with precision, to exactly where you want, from wherever you are. DocAve is the only solution out there that does that reliably”, said Eleazer. “There’s a reason AvePoint

“Apart from the product itself, which is exceptional, I think AvePoint’s sales and support teams are what really set the company apart from the other providers out there.”

is the only solution provider that lets you download a fully-enabled trial version of their software. It's because their solution works, it's stable, and it's packed with functionality that other solutions are lacking."

Throughout the procurement and deployment process, SSA administrators had several contacts with AvePoint's sales and support teams. These contacts reinforced the confidence SSA administrators had with the DocAve solution.

"Apart from the product itself, which is exceptional, I think AvePoint's sales and support teams are what really set the company apart from the other providers out there", commented Eleazer. "If I ever have a question, I can contact someone and immediately get an answer. And if it's something that can't be answered over the phone – then we can escalate to a LiveMeeting and simply handle it right there. That's not an option many other companies offer, and that sets AvePoint head and shoulders above the competition."

The Bottom Line

DocAve has proved the ideal solution for the SSA, giving them the flexibility, reliability, and accessibility they need to meet aggressive SLA's and rigorously protect mission-critical SharePoint data.

SharePoint has met with such success and popularity within the agency, the SSA plans to transition from its pilot program into a full-scale deployment. Because DocAve has proved such a reliable and effective data protection solution, SSA administrators plan on leveraging additional DocAve modules to manage and protect their expanding environment.

"We are so satisfied with DocAve as a backup solution, their modules will be first on the list when it comes to evaluating solutions to meet our future needs, including archiving, administration, and deployment management."

About AvePoint

Since 2001, AvePoint has been a global leader in enterprise-strength infrastructure management 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 Platform delivers comprehensive and flexible infrastructure support for backup and recovery, geo-replication, migration, administration, deployment management, storage optimization, 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 5000 enterprise customers, including many Fortune-500 companies, across 6 continents, via offices in Jersey City, San Jose, Chicago, Washington D.C., Seattle, Atlanta, and Dallas, USA; London, UK; Melbourne, Australia; Singapore; Tokyo, Japan; Munich, Germany; and Changchun, Dalian, China. Winner of the *Best of Tech Ed It Pros* award for "Best SharePoint Product" in 2008, AvePoint is a Managed Gold Certified Microsoft Partner and GSA Certified Provider.

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