



NO MORE INCOMPLETE BACKUPS FOR CLARK CONSULTING

“Everything is backed up using the N-1 Services U-Vault™ solution. It not only saves us hard dollars, but I rest easy at night.”

Founded in 1967, Clark Consulting, helps companies hire and retain executives, directors and key staff through innovative executive benefit and compensation plans. The latest chapter in the story begins with its recent acquisition by AUSA Holding Company, a division of life insurance and pension leader AEGON. With 50 offices of consultants nationwide, Clark Consulting’s remote offices are filled with staff whose primary focus is on serving customers, not on performing backups.

The company needed a backup solution that would free up remote office and IT staff to focus on value-added projects. Meanwhile, strict regulations require the company to comply with strict data archiving and retrieval mandates. Growing rapidly, Clark acquired a company called Stratford Advisory Group and as the consolidated company evaluated its backup and recovery needs it turned to N-1 Services of Westchester, Illinois. N-1 Services had successfully worked with Stratford Advisory Group and had the technology, the experience, and the expertise to create a data protection solution for Clark.

Goals

Due to financial industry regulations, Clark Consulting needed a solution that would complete backups within a reasonable time, and that could be relied on to finish backups successfully every night. Regulatory compliance also required Clark Consulting to retain copies of all its backup tapes, so reducing the cost associated with the backup media itself was an additional important goal.

Clark’s primary goals included:

- Achieve centralized, complete backups on time
- Eliminate tape management burden from remote office staff
- Achieve and maintain ongoing regulatory compliance
- Reduce cost of media for a permanent archive

Challenges

One challenge faced by Clark Consulting’s IT staff was the tremendous expenditure of resources necessary to restore data from unreliable tape backups. Clark Consulting’s CTO Rich Louderbough recalls an example:

Customer Snapshot

Name:

Clark Consulting

Line of Business:

Financial Services

Location:

Barrington, IL

Product:

N-1 Services U-Vault™

Configuration: Windows servers, Compaq and IBM hardware

Capacity: 17 TB

Goals:

- Achieve centralized, complete and on time backups
- Eliminate tape management burden from remote office staff
- Achieve regulatory compliance
- Reduce cost of media for a permanent archive

Challenges:

- Unable to restore all data successfully
- Soaring media cost due to regulatory compliance
- Growing backup media and hardware costs

Solutions:

U-Vault™ provides confidence that all backups were completed successfully and can be restored at a moment’s notice.

Results:

Clark Consulting cut costs and reduced burden on IT staff, enabling them to focus on value-add projects and acquisition integration.

"In financial services, we're subject to subpoenas or audits by regulators," says Louderbough. "We recently had a situation where we had to respond to a routine subpoena that required us to retrieve e-mail history. We spent nearly a month restoring tapes from our previous solution because about 40 to 50 percent of the tapes were unreadable. That took a lot of my folks away from network support and the help desk."

From Louderbough's IT staff of 26, seven or eight people were working on backups an average of five hours per week. The costs associated with tapes and tape management were growing out of control. Louderbough estimates that an average of \$4,000-\$5,000 a month was being spent on tape management. "That's \$4,000 to \$5,000 redirected away from our customers in terms of help desk and infrastructure," he says. Furthermore, Clark was unable to reuse tapes due to regulatory concerns, so media costs were soaring.

Solutions

Clark Consulting considered various solutions before selecting N-1 Services. The U-Vault™ solution, based on industry leading delta block level disk-to-disk backup and recovery technology, cost one-third as much as the others, and with its suite of services, was a more robust solution. With Clark's new implementation of U-Vault™, Clark's IT staff can focus on strategic projects, rather than attempting to recover from often-unreadable tapes. Backups are completed successfully, and restores are easily accessed online, so in the event of a disaster, restores can be performed remotely. In fact, during a recent move to new downtown Chicago offices, Louderbough inadvertently deleted some of his own data. Within minutes, a point-and-click restore, put his data back in its place.

Results

Today, Clark Consulting is managing more data than ever. It is securely backed up for near-instant recovery and regulatory compliance is assured. Clark has eliminated the cost of managing tapes so it can focus on adding value to the business. "Our company is moving into real-time storage and archive solutions. Everything is backed up using the U-Vault™ solution. It not only saves us hard dollars, but I rest easy at night," Louderbough says.

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