

Nichols College

Many Nichols College graduate students rely on online learning applications. The college did not want them to suffer any disruption in the availability of these materials. With PlateSpin Forge® from Micro Focus®, the college can recover data at a fraction of the cost of other disaster recovery solutions. It can also test and validate its disaster recovery plan quickly.

Overview

Based in Dudley, Massachusetts, Nichols College is a private, four-year institution focused on undergraduate and graduate business programs. One in ten Nichols graduates becomes a CEO, corporate president or business owner—a testament to the strength of the Nichols program.

Challenge

To help ensure the success of its students—and its reputation as a distinguished academic institution—Nichols College needed to implement a disaster recovery solution to speed the restoration of critical services in the event of a server outage.

“Our students are our business,” said Kevin Brassard, vice president of information services for Nichols College. The college needed a way to protect mission-critical services such as online courses and email. “We have a strong

“PlateSpin Forge is an easy-to-manage disaster recovery solution we can count on.”

KEVIN BRASSARD

Vice President of Information Services
Nichols College

MBA program, and many of our students rely on our online learning applications,” said Brassard. “We don’t want to expose them to any disruption in availability of learning materials.”

The college set out to find the right disaster recovery solution to speed system recovery. “We had backup tapes, but we didn’t have extra servers to recover data in the event of a failure,” said Brassard. “If our hardware went down, we would have had to rush order new servers in order to recover data, and it could have taken a week or two to get back up and running. That’s not up to the standards of service our students expect.”

Solution

Nichols College worked with GreenPages Technology Solutions, a national IT consulting and integration company, during the selection process. “GreenPages was a strong partner,” said network administrator Nathan Grist. “We could count on them for unbiased input on choosing the right technology to fit in our environment.”

The college evaluated several alternatives, including CA XOssoft and the InMage backup and recovery suite. “When we looked at the cost and complexity of managing other disaster recovery solutions, there was a compelling argument to choose PlateSpin Forge,”



At a Glance

■ Industry

Education—Higher

■ Location

Dudley, Massachusetts

■ Challenge

The university needed to implement a disaster recovery solution to speed the restoration of critical services in the event of a server outage.

■ Solution

Use PlateSpin Forge to replicate production workloads into warm-standby virtual machines that students and faculty can use in a service outage.

■ Results

- + Reduced server recovery time for all protected workloads from weeks to hours
- + Provided a straightforward, low-maintenance disaster recovery solution
- + Granted the ability to test disaster recovery plans

“PlateSpin Forge is very straightforward. There’s just one piece of hardware to manage. It’s low maintenance and has low overhead.”

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said Grist. “The PlateSpin Forge appliance is a turnkey solution, which is particularly important for a small organization like ours that doesn’t have a large support staff.”

PlateSpin Forge protects 10 Windows-based server workloads, including Citrix and Microsoft Exchange Server workloads and WebCT online courses. PlateSpin Forge replicates production workloads into warm-standby virtual machines. In the event of a server outage, the college can quickly power on the replica workloads within the PlateSpin Forge appliance. It can also fail back with one click to the repaired server or a new production server—even one that’s a different make or model than the original. The IT team was also pleased with the appliance’s many features. “PlateSpin Forge is an all-in-one device, and its web-based interface makes it easy to manage,” said Grist.

Nichols College also gained the ability to test its disaster recovery plan. “Previously, it was impossible to test our disaster recovery plans without a spare server, and even if we had one it would have been extremely complex to accurately replicate our environment,” said Brassard. “PlateSpin Forge allows us to replicate workloads and bring them up immediately to validate our disaster recovery plan.”

Finally, the college finds PlateSpin Forge beneficial for testing software upgrades. “If we’re undergoing a major software enhancement, we now have the flexibility to simulate it using PlateSpin Forge before pushing the update live,” said Grist. “It’s the difference between having no idea if a change will cause a problem versus knowing it’s going to work.”

Results

Using PlateSpin Forge, Nichols College has reduced server recovery time for all protected workloads from weeks to hours—at a fraction of the cost of other disaster recovery solutions.

“Disaster recovery solutions can be very complex,” said Brassard. “PlateSpin Forge is very straightforward. There’s just one piece of hardware to manage. It’s low maintenance and has low overhead. Without it, we certainly would have spent more money on another disaster recovery solution that would have required more resources to support it.”

The solution also provides the college with greater peace of mind. “We couldn’t afford to have our IT staff spending a lot of time managing a disaster recovery environment just in case of a server problem,” said Brassard. “PlateSpin Forge is an easy-to-manage solution we can count on.”



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