RheinEnergie AG

Micro Focus Backup Navigator increases productivity and enables accurate chargeback for leading German utility.

Overview

The RheinEnergie AG supplies industries, trades, and households across the Rhineland, Germany, with water and electrical, gas, heat, and steam energy in a safe and environmentally friendly manner. Since 1999, Micro Focus Data Protector has been used by The RheinEnergie to protect data and business by enabling business continuity and disaster recovery. Backup

Navigator was deployed to enable accelerated reporting and chargeback capabilities.

Challenge

Ensuring Competitive Differentiation in a Changing Marketplace

"Market forces in the energy industry are impacting the way we do business," states Erik Schubert, system administrator at The Rhein-Energie AG, a public utility company. "With depressed energy prices, market liberalization, and increased industry consolidation as utility companies seek improved earnings, we're always looking for new ways to improve operational efficiencies. Smart metering has significantly increased the amount of data collected, while user demand for faster insights is driving the deployment of in-memory IT solutions. At the same time our budget is under pressure so we're constantly looking for ways to do more with less."

Founded in 2002 as a subsidiary of the over 130-year old GEW Köln AG, The RheinEnergie AG took over the responsibility of supplying energy and drinking water to 2.5 million people in the city of Cologne and the Rhine-Ruhr metropolitan region. Together with an extensive partner network, The RheinEnergie AG supplies industries, trades, and households in Cologne, Germany, and surrounding areas with water and electrical, gas, heat, and steam

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ERIK SCHUBERT
System Administrator
The RheinEnergie AG

RheinEnergie

At a Glance

■ **Industry**
Energy & Utilities

■ **Location**
Rhineland, Germany

■ **Challenge**
Gain insights by simplifying the Data Protector reporting environment to enhance data protection.

■ **Products and Services**
Micro Focus Data Protector
Micro Focus Backup Navigator

■ **Success Highlights**
+ Increased productivity, cost-efficiency, and accurate chargeback
+ Enhanced control of the backup environment for better data protection
+ Gained better insight into backup processes with interactive management dashboards

energy generated in state-of-the-art gas and steam turbine power plants.

Solution

Managing Backup in a Heterogeneous Environment

"We provide IT services for both our parent company and other subsidiaries," relates Schubert. "Since 1999, we've used Data Protector as the primary tool for protecting all of our data across an extremely complex, heterogeneous IT environment. Every two weeks, we backup over two petabytes of storage attached to some 250 servers and nearly 1,500 virtual machines running on various versions of Microsoft Windows and UNIX operating systems. Data Protector protects all of our Oracle databases and SAP and Microsoft environments, in addition to standard file and web servers."

Data Protector is an enterprise-class backup and recovery solution that simplifies and standardizes data protection across heterogeneous environments, applications, and media with an extensive support matrix for third-party systems and solutions, eliminating the need for multiple point products. By standardizing backup and recovery across locations, applications, formats, storage platforms, operating systems, and hypervisors, Data Protector improves reliability, increases business resiliency, and reduces the cost and complexity of backup operations.

"With a data management team of only two employees, it's critical that we take full advantage of the capabilities that Data Protector offers, including its cell-based architecture," adds Schubert. "We've divided our backup environment into different cells to help us easily manage our data based on the needs of the business. We also use the Manager of Managers (MoM) capability to centralize monitoring and media management, increasing our productivity and enhancing our control of granular data backup and restore across all cells.

Taking Advantage of One Vendor, Many Solutions

"While Data Protector was handling backup and restore according to our expectations, we felt that we could increase operational efficiencies if we had more insight into the backups themselves," states Schubert. "Because of the complexity of the backup environment, it was difficult to understand what was happening in the background, as well as anticipate future capacity needs. We also needed to find a faster way to identify gaps in our data protection from unprotected VMs or unreliable devices."

"We had previously developed our own reporting tool along with some Microsoft Excel spreadsheets," continues Schubert, "but they didn't give us the depth of insight or the range of reports that we really needed. That's when we started looking at Backup Navigator."

A companion product to Data Protector, Backup Navigator addresses the challenges of optimizing the backup and recovery environment through predictive analytics and automated reporting. With over 100 out-of-the-box reports and customizable dashboards, administrators can quickly gain insight into over 75 key performance indicators related to backup and recovery operations. They can proactively identify issues before they culminate in outages and data loss, and run rapid, root-cause analysis that highlights trends and provides scenario-based modeling to discover potential scheduling conflicts, enabling better management and future capacity planning of backup resources.

Meeting the Needs of the Business

"Once we'd heard about Backup Navigator," explains Schubert, "we assigned a graduate student the task of evaluating the software from a technical and financial perspective to see whether it would meet the current and future needs of The RheinEnergie AG."

"Almost immediately, we were able to see the benefits of deploying Backup Navigator," continues Schubert. "The interactive, customizable dashboards provided the information we needed to identify inefficiencies within our backup operations—including how backup resources were being used. It's enabled us to make quick decisions and resolve potential issues before our backup and recovery processes are impacted. In addition, we can now customize and tailor reports to match the specific needs of the user, which helps them improve and accelerate their decision making capabilities and quickly trigger the appropriate action for each event."

"Since we supply data storage, backup, and recovery services to multiple organizations, it's important that we have the capability to bill them based on their usage," adds Schubert. "Navigator allows us to create and run reports based on the specific needs of each stakeholder. It also enables us to scope and generate accurate charge-back reports using data from multiple Data Protector cells which we use to bill them."

Results

Leveraging Backup Navigator to Optimize Backup Operations

"We're always looking for ways to speed up our backups and optimize our infrastructure," says Schubert, "so we appreciate the variety of dashboards and reports included with Backup Navigator. For instance, the overview report provides us with a snapshot of the overall health of our backup environment, while the session report gives us the specific status of each backup session, including the resources used, the performance of the backup during that session, and any issues encountered. By utilizing the different reports, we can quickly drill down into any aspect of the Data Protector environment and identify opportunities for making it more efficient."

"The capacity reports are especially important," adds Schubert, "because they help us to keep track of the capacity of both our source and target systems based on current and potential data growth rates. Backup Navigator collects, correlates, and analyzes how our backup and recovery infrastructure is used, enabling us to proactively calculate our future storage requirements and costefficiently address our needs before we run out of capacity."

"Deploying Backup Navigator has reduced management complexity and increased our control of the backup environment," stresses Schubert. "It's enabled us to identify and resolve backup failures much faster than before, providing increased protection for our data and our business. And with better insight available through the interactive dashboard and comprehensive reports, we've made significant progress in optimizing the backup environment and improving our cost efficiencies. Over time, we anticipate that it will increase management's confidence in our ability to meet all of our SLAs on a regular basis."

Improving Efficiencies and Customer Service

"Backup Navigator has had a significant impact on our ability to service our customers, reducing the amount of time it takes to resolve a backup failure by up to 10 percent" reveals Schubert. "It's also contributed to an increase in our productivity. We've experienced a reduction of approximately 40 percent in the amount of time it takes us to manage our Data Protector environment. And the increased efficiency of our reporting allows us to respond to our stakeholders up to 80 percent faster than we could previously, leveraging the sophisticated, cross-cell reporting capabilities that helps ensure that chargeback is accurately aligned to usage."

Schubert sums it up: "Backup Navigator has significantly reduced the amount of effort it takes to generate reports—technical and management—that help us understand the best way of using our Data Protector backup environment to meet the needs of our customers. It's provided us with real-time analytics and trending data to optimize our data protection strategy and achieve optimal infrastructure utilization without sacrificing the efficiency of our backup operations."