



Nichols College

Nichols College was looking to implement a disaster recovery solution to speed the restoration of critical services in the event of a server outage. By deploying PlateSpin Forge® from Novell, the college is able to recover data within hours, at a fraction of the cost of other disaster recovery solutions.

Overview

Based in Dudley, Massachusetts, Nichols College is a private, four-year institution with a strong focus on undergraduate and graduate business programs. The strength of the Nichols program is demonstrated by the success of its students. One in ten of its graduates becomes a CEO, corporate president or business owner.

Challenge

The IT team at Nichols College was looking for a way to protect mission-critical services such as online courses and e-mail. "Our students are our business," said Kevin Brassard, vice president of Information Services for Nichols College. "We needed to ensure the continuity of critical systems if a server failed. We have a strong MBA program, and many of our students rely on our online learning applications. We don't want to expose them to any disruption in availability of learning materials."

The college embarked on a disaster recovery plan, identifying the highest priority applications to protect. It then 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 a national IT consulting and integration company, during the selection process. "They were a strong partner," said Nathan Grist, network administrator for Nichols College. "We could count on them for unbiased input on choosing the right technology to fit in our environment."

Nichols College evaluated several alternatives, including XOsoft* from CA and InMage*, and was impressed with the PlateSpin Forge appliance from Novell. "When we looked at the cost and complexity of managing other disaster recovery solutions, there was a compelling argument to choose PlateSpin Forge," 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. We were equally impressed with Novell's technical staff."

Nichols College at a glance:

Private business college in Dudley, Massachusetts

■ Industry:

Education

■ Location:

United States

■ Products and Services:

PlateSpin Forge

■ Results:

- *Reduced server recovery time for protected workloads from weeks to hours*
- *Gained ability to quickly test and validate disaster recovery plan*
- *Drove down support costs of maintaining a disaster recovery solution*

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*Vice President of Information Services
Nichols College*



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Nichols College

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The IT team was also pleased with many of the appliance's features. "PlateSpin Forge is an all-in-one device, and its Web-based interface makes it easy to manage," said Grist. "The ability to automatically failover a server to PlateSpin Forge, and failback once the server is up and running again was very important to us. And we liked that it's flexible in the way it replicates workloads."

The all-in-one PlateSpin Forge appliance from Novell now protects 10 Windows-based server workloads, including Citrix*, WebCT* online courses and the Microsoft* Exchange server. In the event of a server outage, workloads can be quickly moved to the PlateSpin Forge appliance until they can be restored to the production environment. The solution's failback process allows the organization to automatically failover from the down production server to PlateSpin Forge, and then failback with one click of a button to the repaired or new production server.

The college has 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."

Nichols College has also found 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. "Testing makes a huge impact. It's the difference between having no idea if a change will cause a problem versus knowing it's going to work."

Results

By implementing a PlateSpin Forge appliance, Nichols College has significantly 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."

PlateSpin Forge 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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