




Data center Efficiency means the next 5 servers are



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SMB Disaster Recovery Insurance Plan
By [Drew Robb](#)
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It isn't easy adopting a comprehensive disaster recovery (DR) strategy if you are in the SMB category. As Memphis-based Lipscomb & Pitts Insurance LLC has a little over 100 employees, it can only afford to have one or two people in IT.

"Although we had had two IT staff, one was more of a lower level desktop support person so in reality we only had one technically skilled network-based person," said Mike Yates, vice president of finance at Lipscomb and Pitts. "If he was out of the office, sick, had a sick child or was overwhelmed by service calls, everything else shut down."

One guy backing up data for 100 staff and looking after a whole lot more besides was a recipe for failure. Now factor in the demands of management to improve backup processes and add in greater DR protection and it became obvious that something had to change.

"We were not comfortable having one person responsible for all of our IT tasks, including data protection, because it was a potential liability in the event of a disaster," said Yates.

The company decided to outsource its network infrastructure, data backup, and support as well as the CIO role and ordering of new equipment. For that, it turned to [masterIT LLC](#), a Bartlett, TN-based managed services provider. It now has only one IT person who handles desktop support and special project work. masterIT utilizes EVault InfoStage and EVault InfoStage DualVault by Seagate Technology LLC of Scotts Valley, CA, plus Agent plug-ins for Microsoft SQL Server, Novell Netware and Open Transaction Manager.

All of this is operated by masterIT as part of its "IT as a Utility" managed service. A total of seven Windows servers take care of 250 GB of backup each night.

"I feel a much greater level of comfort knowing that our data is backed up, 300 miles away on a daily basis," said Yates. "I also feel much better knowing that I have more than one perspective on a problem. Previously, I would have one person to ask a question or bounce an idea off of. Now, I have one person internally, and access to 4 or 5 people externally all with various backgrounds, perspectives and expertise."

Steady Growth

Lipscomb & Pitts Insurance has grown from a two-man office in 1954 to over 100 employees today. It is the largest privately held insurance agency in the Mid-South. More than 150 carriers rely on it for personal and commercial insurance, as well as health, life and employee benefits.

To cope with steady growth and further safeguard its data, Yates investigated the possibility of moving to a faster backup platform and establishing a collocated data center off site. The price tag soon persuaded him against that course of action and continued making manual backups and storing tapes offsite at a local bank in case of disaster.

masterIT conducted an assessment of the site and general IT needs. This convinced Yates that disk-based backup could be a viable option. The company hired masterIT to take over much of the backup and network management. Evault provides both local and remote online backup and recovery without involvement from IT at Lipscomb & Pitts.

"It's a great comfort knowing the data is going out every night to a site 300 miles away rather than going down the street to the bank," said Yates. "The process with EVault and masterIT has been largely transparent to our staff. The backups literally run themselves."

With the company operating in the insurance field, it is used to providing reassurance to clients about intangible benefits such as peace of mind if any negative events take place. In this case, however, Lipscomb & Pitts actually gets to practice the event. masterIT performs a full test-restore of the data every month to verify everything is as it should be.

"After we started performing test restores with masterIT, I felt a great sense of relief," said Yates. "When I got the call that the data was now in Atlanta and being tested regularly for restores, it was quite a load off my mind."

He advises IT managers not to tempt fate by leaving their data unprotected. With such services available, he said it is possible for companies to achieve full protection without having to spend an arm and a leg. But as it will cost something, you have to break down the economics so management can clearly see the value.

"Show the CEO what eight hours of down time costs in paid wages, lost revenue and immeasurable cost in lost confidence by your clients or key vendors," said Yates. "That's the best way to put a number on it."



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