

GEORGE BROWN COLLEGE CHOOSES ACRONIS BACKUP ADVANCED FOR WINDOWS SERVER, REDUCES DOWNTIME FROM HOURS TO JUST MINUTES

Acronis



ORGANISATION:

George Brown College

INDUSTRY:

Education and Research

KEY CHALLENGES:

- Reduce server downtime
- Speed up deployments

ENVIRONMENT:

- Large Windows Server population
- Multiple Web-based applications
- Large database

SOLUTION:

- Acronis Backup Advanced for Windows Server

BUSINESS BENEFITS:

- Mission-critical applications now available 100% of the time
- Remote location response times cut by 95% or more
- Minimised time, effort and staff during rapid server population growth

INTRODUCTION

With nine out of 10 graduates hired within six months of graduation, Toronto's George Brown College has established a reputation for equipping students with the skills, industry experience and credentials to pursue the careers of their choice.

From its two main campuses located across the downtown core, George Brown offers nearly 160 programmes across a wide variety of professions to a student body of 60,000 (including those enrolled in full-time, part-time and continuing education programmes). Students can earn diplomas, post-graduate certificates, industry accreditations, apprenticeships and four-year bachelor degrees.

The college's Data Centre Operations team is responsible for administrative, student and production applications running on dozens of servers within the IT operation of this very large enterprise. However, the college lacked two things that affected its commitment to make data readily available to users: the ability to rapidly recover failed servers and an easier-to-use, faster way to deploy a rapidly-growing Windows server population.

100% UPTIME REQUIRED

George Brown College had been using Symantec® Ghost® for deployment of whole servers, applications, and more, but that product required administrators to take machines offline to image their disks. The college also needed to be able to produce an image across a network share to avoid having to physically go to each machine for a deployment or recovery.

The requirement to take a server offline also had a negative impact on deployments. "With Symantec Ghost, each server deployment could take a couple of hours," says Wayne Kyrlyuk, the college Administrator, Data Centre Operations, within the Information Technology Services group. After an evaluation of various products that would provide greater ease of use and reduced administrator involvement, the college chose Acronis data protection software.

ANSWERS PRIMARY NEEDS

Once the college made its decision, it moved quickly to explore the new product's capabilities. Over time it has found that Acronis Backup Advanced for Windows Server answers five primary needs. The first is bare metal restores: host OS images are now installed in minutes from a SAN rather than the hours once required for manual builds. The IT group also uses Acronis disk imaging technology to deploy new servers. Acronis Universal Restore shortens maintenance windows for drive replacements or host hardware upgrades. Development and testing activities can be completed quickly using Acronis to restore a server without delay to any previous point in time. The college also uses Acronis Universal Restore as a cloning tool for production, development and test systems.

Complementary to existing EMC® enterprise recovery products

George Brown College uses Acronis products in a way that is wholly complementary to the functions of an EMC NetWorker® backup suite that has been in place for many years. Acronis is installed on every host and produces a new image several times a month that is retained on a SAN. This gives the Data Centre a fully up-to-date, bootable image of each server and its applications, available and ready to go on a rescue disk if a hardware failure takes a server offline. "If a system goes down completely with a hardware failure, we can replace or repair a hard drive, drop in the latest Acronis image from the SAN and make it bootable," Kyryluk explains. "The IT administrator then repopulates the application data from EMC NetWorker's daily backup of all our systems. Acronis products have simplified recoveries and effectively reduced them to non-events, minimising time, effort and staff as we grew our server population by several times in the past several years."

Reduces major administrative activities to 'non-events'

"Acronis products have simplified recoveries and effectively reduced them to non-events, minimising time, effort and staff as we grew our server population by several times in the past several years. It helped to have Acronis during our busiest development period because it is a strong change management tool," Kyryluk says. When they encounter a problem, administrators can immediately return to the last good system state and try another approach.

"We try to automate everything."

"Many of the college's systems are Web-based, and the college runs a lot of Web servers off its main database," Kyryluk says. "We try to automate everything. Rather than have one host serve an application, we use Acronis to take an image of one host and clone it elsewhere, creating multiple servers to divide the load and achieve redundancy. We just change SIDs and size disk partitions accordingly as we move to the new machine." Acronis software's ability to automate many day-to-day administrative tasks serves the college especially well in the summer each year during an annual eight-to-twelve-hour shutdown. The college takes advantage of this window of opportunity to complete a list of tightly choreographed general improvements. "Acronis unburdened us from the time required to perform maintenance and upgrade functions by eliminating the need to take down a system to complete them," he continues. "We couldn't complete all the work when we used Ghost, but with Acronis, we have time to do everything we planned."

Continuing to exploit Acronis capabilities

George Brown College continues to learn new ways to use Acronis software. "We're exploiting as many features as we can," Kyryluk says. For example, administrators can open up an image and extract folders if they need them, rather than go through a server recovery. Or they can use Acronis to direct Acronis backup images to a network share, a feature unavailable on Ghost. Restore activities can be carried out remotely from a central console, which makes it much easier for the IT team to remotely manage the college's dark sites.

ABOUT ACRONIS

Acronis sets the standard for New Generation Data Protection through its backup, disaster recovery, and secure access solutions. Powered by the AnyData Engine and set apart by its image technology, Acronis delivers easy, complete and safe backups of all files, applications and OS across any environment — virtual, physical, cloud and mobile.

Founded in 2002, Acronis protects the data of over 5 million consumers and 300,000 businesses in over 130 countries. With its more than 100 patents, Acronis' products have been named best product of the year by Network Computing, TechTarget and IT Professional and cover a range of features, including migration, cloning and replication.

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