

"Neverfail is really about reducing a huge recovery time. We don't have to wait days to have servers rebuilt and restored with tapes. We sleep better at night with Neverfail's products."

*Janine Sylvas
IT Director
Stone Pigman*

Katrina Update:

Neverfail and PLA Deliver Hurricane-Ready Solution for Law Firm **Stone Pigman** in New Orleans.

The Business Need

When it comes to disaster recovery, "good" is not always "good enough" – as many organizations on the Gulf Coast realized after Hurricane Katrina.

Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann, L.L.C. is a leading law firm located in downtown New Orleans. Janine Sylvas, their IT Director, was well aware of what a hurricane can do to IT equipment and business-critical data and the firm was in the beginning stages of enhancing its disaster recovery plan. When it became apparent that the city was going to be struck by a major, category-five hurricane, she began following the existing disaster plan. This included sending off backup tapes to Iron Mountain for safekeeping at an inland site and sending a second set to a secure location near Houston, Texas operated by Project Leadership Associates (PLA), a leading provider of information technology consulting and services.

The tapes arrived safely at their inland locations and were not damaged by the storm. However, the data still needed to be restored from the tapes and Sylvas felt it was a problem in the long run to rely solely on the use of tapes as the firm's only strategy.

"One of the limitations of relying solely on tapes is the possibility of corruption, of not getting all the information from the tape," she explained. "Timeliness also is a factor. Even if the tapes are perfect and you get 100 percent off the tapes, you're still talking about some extended time required to restore the information. This could be days, depending on what sort of information you have."

After the storm, the firm's lawyers were anxious to return to their offices. However, Sylvas contended that the remote servers should not return to New Orleans until the firm had a better backup plan. Lawyers returned to their offices, but continued accessing the servers through Citrix until a plan utilizing a high availability solution was in place.

She started talking seriously with the firm's executive director and management committee about alternatives to tape backup. Everyone agreed that the firm needed an effective, fully integrated solution that would keep users connected to their data and applications regardless of what happened. The committee also required that the solution would have to be competitively priced.

The Evaluation Process

Sylvas discussed various solutions with Lee Hovermale, Senior Management Consultant with PLA. An expert in failover technology, Hovermale considered a number of options for Stone Pigman, including traditional clustering solutions and Storage Area Networks (SANs) to SANs replication. All these options proved to be too expensive, hard to manage, or both.

Next, Hovermale evaluated several failover products, including Double-Take, Legato RepliStor, and XOssoft Assured Recovery. He decided that these products also were not appropriate for the needs of Stone Pigman. "With Double-Take, you have to write scripts," he explained. "The limitation with RepliStor is that it doesn't handle immediate failover of "key" services, so again, you have to write scripts. With XOssoft, we just didn't feel that they replicated the environment very well at the object level."





However, one suite of failover products stood out – Neverfail. In his estimation, the Neverfail products were superior, especially in terms of supporting Microsoft Exchange. “With Neverfail,” he said, “the users get their true Exchange environment. It’s like they’re back in their office. Other products don’t offer that.”

He shared his evaluations with Sylvas. Together, they decided to implement a Neverfail solution.

The Solution

Three products were installed to ensure a comprehensive disaster recovery solution. Neverfail for Exchange supports the law firm’s Microsoft Exchange 2003 platform, ensuring availability for email. Neverfail for SQL server supports the firm’s Microsoft SQL server environment, providing continuous availability of critical database applications. Neverfail for File Server protects their print server environment and other applications.

In Houston, PLA installed three Neverfail redundant servers. Data is now replicated in real time between the primary servers in New Orleans and the secondary servers in Houston.

The Results

Today, the Neverfail solution at Stone Pigman provides full replication of data and applications, as well as automatic switchover capability to keep users seamlessly connected, with no need to restart applications after failback.

“If we have another storm,” said Sylvas, “it’s comforting to know that we will be able to get to our information with little or no downtime. Moreover, all changes will be captured.”

She added, “Neverfail is really about reducing recovery time. We don’t have to wait days to have servers rebuilt and restored with tapes. We sleep better at night with Neverfail’s products.”

THE COMPANY

Stone Pigman Walther Wittmann, L.L.C.

Founded in 1929, Stone Pigman has earned its reputation representing national, regional and local businesses in a full range of litigation and business matters, including corporate, securities, real estate, intellectual property, health care, tax and estate planning.

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