Saving the SAN: Information Lifecycle Management in the City of Denton, Texas

Located forty miles northwest of Dallas, Texas, the City of Denton is home to over ninety thousand residents, as well as forty thousand students at two major universities - the University of North Texas and Texas Woman's University. The city government uses Novell, Inc.'s (Provo, UT) GroupWise collaboration software as its primary platform for email, scheduling and group communications. It also integrates with a J. D. Edwards (recently acquired by PeopleSoft, Inc. - Pleasanton, CA) workflow product. The system has about one thousand regular users, though additional employees also use GroupWise for meeting rooms, equipment checkout and other functions that required user licenses.

The primary GroupWise storage resides on a 1.2 TB Storage Area Network from XIOtech Corporation (Eden Prairie, MN) utilizing Computer Associates (Islandia, NY) BrightStor storage management software. Archived files go to an array of Snap Servers - Network Attached Storage devices from San Jose, CA-based Snap Appliances, Inc. But storage space was a continual problem.

"I constantly had to ask users to clear out their mailboxes - remove anything they didn't need and archive what they wanted to keep," says Alex Pettit, the city's Director of Technical Services.

He has to repeat this action at least once every quarter. But, even so, it looked like the city would soon need to add more capacity. Given the economic climate, that was not a viable option.

"I had to find a way to make the best use of the resources we currently had," Pettit continues.

He wanted a software solution that would automatically manage the files and archive them when needed, rather than having to rely on the users to do the job manually. But he did have one major concern. He was planning to upgrade from GroupWise 6.01 to 6.5 and wanted to make sure that the storage management product would work seamlessly with both versions.

"There is nothing worse," he explains, "than upgrading the core application and then having to go back and remigrate all the files so that the new software version can access them."

After considering the available options, he installed CaminoSoft Corporation's (Westlake Village, CA) Managed Server HSM Information Lifecycle Management (ILM) software, a product he was sure would work with both GroupWise versions. He configured it to monitor all the GroupWise files and move any which users hadn't accessed in the past ninety days from the XIOtech SAN over to the Snap Servers.

"Setting up the software was a no brainer," he reports. "It was that easy."

It has now been a year since he installed the software and Pettit reports that he hasn't had to send users another message telling them to clean out their files. He is now looking at moving files that are more than a year old off the nearline Snap Servers onto a CD array to free up even more space.

"Using CaminoSoft ILM software has extended the life of the SAN tremendously," he says. "I thought the SAN would be eaten up by GroupWise, but now we are able to use the SAN for other storage needs without having to expand it at all."