"Now with SEP, the time spent managing our backup solution has decreased from about 1-2 hours per day to 1-2 hours per week."

Michael Black
Senior Network Administrator

Millikin University

Situation

Millikin University's IT Department was in a sticky situation. Their existing backup solution was becoming less reliable and taking up increasingly more time and resources. "We had a lot of jobs that would error out, which usually meant diving in and trying to research an error code in order to figure out why the software had failed. A lot of clients would also fail, so in turn we would lose a lot of jobs because the clients wouldn't stay running. We would have to stop and restart backups and it was about a 50/50 chance of whether we would get our backups in our window or not. There were also a lot of speed issues as well. The software was quite slow as far as trying to get a backup job accomplished," recalled Michael Black, Senior Network Administrator.

SITUATION (cont'd)

"We were spending 1 to 2 hours per day just on reviewing jobs, making sure we would catch up because if we missed a backup, it would involve trying to re-run that job so we could have a backup copy, and also needing to plan to do this in a good window of opportunity so it would not impact production." Because of the slow backups and lack of reliability, Millikin decided it was time to research their options and switch to a new solution.

CHALLENGE

Millikin's environment consists of approximately 90 servers, with around 85 of those virtualized running a 50/50 split of Windows and Linux with a couple Solaris and Netware Servers. The network runs through a Cisco 7000 core to a redundant data center with a 40 GB link. A GB network is run from the core and data center to buildings spread out across the campus. They back up over GB links to two JBOD Arrays, with SEP running on a Norco System Disk Array Server with an expansion SuperMicro Disk Array.

The IT staff at Millikin wanted a solution that would eliminate the time and resources wasted babysitting backup software. The new solution would need to be priced competitively, function with their current hardware environment, improve backup windows and reliability, and keep the University within HIPPA and FERPA regulatory guidelines.

SEP Software

SOLUTION

Millikin looked at a long list of backup solutions, including IBM Tivoli and Symantec NetBackup, but many were not cost effective solutions for what they offered. After extensively testing different options, Millikin decided to choose SEP to replace their backup software for their entire environment. "Ultimately, our reason for choosing SEP was the integration, everything was supported under one solution. The interface and the GUI were very easy to use. SEP was very straightforward and very user friendly. The price was competitive and I could see that in the long run it was going to be a better solution for us with less cost involved," Black said. "So after trying it out and working with the interface, it was very easy to learn and everything was just right there at your fingertips."

RESULTS

The installation of SEP "went without any errors. Getting it configured to our network was no problem at all. It was all step by step with no hassles. The hardest part was deciding how we wanted to organize our new system, but the transition was extremely smooth. The client installs were easy regardless of whether on Windows, Linux or even our few NetWare servers. We did most of the installation ourselves and when we did utilize SEP's professional services to make sure we were doing everything right or were on the right track, the support staff was great. In fact, the support staff was one of the factors that went into purchasing the solution. Any time we have used SEP's support, they have been very quick to respond, very courteous, very friendly and we have a lot of confidence in them," said Black.

SEP has provided a campus-wide solution for Millikin, backing up their entire environment, including everything from administrative to financial to test systems. After choosing SEP, both Millikin's backup windows and the time spent managing the software have been dramatically reduced.

"We are now seeing about double the backup speeds as we did with the old solution. Our backup windows have become significantly smaller, some reduced by about 300 percent. Most of our backups finish in under 4 hours and if we want, we can successfully backup our entire campus

over a 48 hour weekend with SEP, without any worry about whether or not backups will complete. For example, we have a large file server, that under our previous solution would run for 3 to 4 days and be about 50 to 60 percent completed and then the backup would fail. So that file server, which has been very difficult to back up in the past because of the way it was built, now backs up in under 10 hours with SEP," recounted Black.

"Since we have been running SEP, we have had very minimal issues and if a job ever fails, it was because of something we had done. We ran out of space on a certain drive or we didn't get a client installed or we rebooted a server and the client didn't start; but nothing as far as having an error in an actual backup copy. Our time spent managing our backup solution has gone from 1 to 2 hours per day, to 1 to 2 hours per week, and that estimate for SEP is on the high side. We only spend time looking at SEP to verify that everything is running smoothly, space looks ok and perhaps make any changes that we may have to our backup schedules."

"We have been extremely happy with SEP's richness of functionality and how everything is pretty clear cut. Working with SEP as a whole has created a very friendly, professional relationship from our standpoint. We feel very comfortable with the solution and we appreciate that our reps from SEP check in with us and let us know about updates available. The staff is always available to answer questions regarding licensing, additional modules, new features coming out, or even to provide suggestions for future development. The solution has been quite a blessing for us and I would recommend it to anyone in my field looking for a solution," expressed Black.

ABOUT MILLIKIN UNIVERSITY

Millikin University is an independent, four-year university in Decatur, Illinois with approximately 2,200 students in traditional and non-traditional undergraduate and graduate degree programs. Millikin University is a very well respected institution of higher learning. The Princeton Review named it one of the 2014 Best Colleges in the Midwest and it received a Best College ranking from Forbes' 2014 list of America's Top Colleges. For more information, visit www.millikin.edu.