

Thrifty IT Helps Make Cinemark a Winner in the Competitive Movie Business

QUICK FACTS

Industry/Solution:

- Entertainment

Platform/File System:

- Microsoft Windows 2000, 2003

Applications:

- Microsoft Exchange
- Internally-developed theatre management applications

Partner Hardware:

- 350 servers
- 3,500 POS workstations
- Xiotech Storage Area Network (SAN)
- 2 Spectra Logic tape libraries

Challenges:

- Need for highly automated backup solution
- Need for flexible, easy to manage backup solution
- Need to manage Microsoft Exchange storage requirements, automate data migration

Solution:

- CommVault Data Archiver
- CommVault Galaxy Backup & Recovery
- Synthetic Full Backup

Benefits:

- Automated management of email storage using Data Archiver
- Reduced backup management time
- Improved technical support
- Fast, easy restores save time for users and IT staff

Customer Profile

Cinemark USA, Inc. operates over 300 motion picture theatres and more than 3,300 screens across the United States and internationally in 13 countries, mainly in Mexico and South and Central America. In the extremely competitive theatre exhibition industry, Cinemark is a leading innovator. Features like stadium seating, wall-to-wall screens, and digital sound are hallmarks of Cinemark theatres; Cinemark was among the first theatre exhibitors to offer real-time Internet-based advance ticketing at cinemark.com. Cinemark understands that information technology is a powerful competitive tool, and CommVault software plays an important role in Cinemark's IT structure, providing the foundation for the company's backup and disaster recovery data protection strategy.

Data Management Environment

Cinemark's IT department uses IT for strategic advantage in running the business, while minimizing the overhead costs of IT operations. Explains Director of Network Systems & Services Chris Norman, "Cinemark has its own successful ways of doing things and operating theatres. IT's job is to take those internally developed business rules and strategies and implement them, automating business processes to reduce costs and help make the company more profitable."

Cinemark's IT department's Application Development Group writes custom-built software, including their own point of sale (POS) and enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. Says Norman, "We write applications that run the theatres efficiently and also give us good visibility into what's happening in the theatres, and therefore help us to make good business decisions."

The operations side of the Cinemark IT house is Norman's Network Systems & Services Group. "We do everything from replacing printer cartridges to building an international communications network," says Norman. The group supports a corporate IT infrastructure that

includes 3,000-plus POS desktops, 350-plus servers, storage area networks (SANs), and backup and disaster recovery (DR) facilities.

CommVault Delivers Flexible Backup Processes

Backup processes at Cinemark make use of the broad capabilities and flexibility of the CommVault software, incorporating multiple techniques, including both direct-to-disk and disk-to-tape backups, CommVault Synthetic Full backups, and disk-to-disk-to-tape-to-offsite backups for disaster recovery. Determining what to back up to tape and what to back up disk-to-disk depends on the critical nature of the data. "If we have sensitive data," says Norman, "it does not make good sense to have an unnecessary extra copy on disk. So sensitive data goes straight to tape." Applications backed up using CommVault Galaxy include accounting, payroll, inventory, and Microsoft Exchange email.

Data Archiver Saves Time and Resources

To help keep tight control of IT costs, Cinemark looks for products that provide agility, ease of use, and flexibility. CommVault Data Archiver is a good example of such a product. As email is the primary means of communication across the many Cinemark locations, keeping Microsoft Exchange email running smoothly and economically becomes a critical IT mission. Says Norman, "We are using CommVault Data Archive to automatically migrate data out of user mailboxes and primary storage to secondary, less expensive storage, according to corporate data retention policies." Data Archive helps keep mailboxes from getting huge and bogging down the whole email system. Furthermore, it does this automatically, so users and administrators don't have to spend time managing email storage. Data Archive shrinks backup windows, reduces primary disk storage, eases IT administrative burden, and improves primary application and file system performance — all of which help to reduce overall cost, and fit right in with Cinemark's cost-conscious IT strategy.

Restores are a Priority

"We service many user-originated data restores," says Norman, "as well as periodic system restores. Continued success in both areas is crucial from a service standpoint. We work closely with CommVault's support and the local CommVault office developing and refining procedures around restoration processes."

CommVault's automatic, color-coded email reports quickly draw attention to any failures. The CommVault interface panes tell the IT worker at a glance what jobs are in progress as well as percentage complete, filtered alerts and notifications, and an interface paradigm allowing for quick drill down to retention policies or for remediation.

"Regardless of the backup process, it is successful only if you can actually get your data back," says Norman. "Going back full circle, successful recovery depends on having good backups of the right data at the right time." CommVault's granular reporting, alerting, media management, and retention control help Cinemark's IT staff ensure that they have solid backups, both near-line and offsite.

Ease of use is the Key for Cinemark

"We can make IT a business advantage because we control costs," explains Norman. "To do that, we run a very small IT staff, and that's why we need reliable, easy-to-use solutions. We chose CommVault because we liked the unique way it handles backup. CommVault gives us good backup, as automated as possible, and with minimum management needed. For example, CommVault tracks tapes for retention. That's good, because it makes less work for us. CommVault manages its own inventory automatically and at the same time helps us enforce retention rules. CommVault's easy to use interface empowers users to self-

serve for backup. Bottom line: CommVault helps us deliver a higher level of user service with lower cost."

Norman continues, "For example, CommVault's flexible architecture helps us lower cost by letting us take advantage of our network infrastructure to access shared libraries." Cinemark has two Spectralogics libraries on a Xiotech SAN. The CommVault server is on the SAN, and their critical application servers are also on the SAN, with CommVault agents on the servers. "Instead of going over the Ethernet," explains Norman, "CommVault lets us leverage the SAN and its fibre mesh, so the critical servers can back up direct to tape over the SAN. The net effect is to help drive down traffic and ultimately costs on the Ethernet."

Choosing CommVault

Cinemark first became aware of CommVault in the course of doing research for an upgrade of their storage and backup infrastructure. CommVault came up in their research on-line, and in discussions with peers in the IT community. Most importantly, when Cinemark solicited bids for a larger storage and backup integration initiative, both of the primary contenders for the storage upgrade included CommVault as their backup software solution.

"Cinemark chose to go to CommVault," says Norman, "because we were poised for rapid growth and needed a backup solution that would scale to our infrastructure without requiring unnecessary scaling of the department. Doing backups is critical detail work when you consider managing corporate and legal data retention policies, media rotation lifecycle, maintenance windows, and disparate recovery needs for different corporate customers. CommVault's value proposition was increased attention to these

details. CommVault either automates these details or facilitates their timely completion. CommVault is not only a solid backup solution, but provides an optional feature set that lets Cinemark decide the best way to integrate it into our larger enterprise."

Continues Norman, "No solution is an island; it exists in the context of the working environment. CommVault's flexible architecture let Cinemark acquire a backup solution that best fit our specific needs. In other words, CommVault's architecture of optional features allowed Cinemark to continue to maximize pre-existing solutions and procedures. We were able to maximize CommVault's strengths by making it part of a larger storage and recovery strategy."

"A Higher Level of Support"

Installation of the CommVault software as part of the larger storage and backup initiative went smoothly. Recalls Norman, "We dropped CommVault into a scenario where we had limited resources and not much time, and they helped us get up and going. While we were installing they showed us best practices and gave us training so that we could manage backups on our own." Since then, Norman has been very pleased with customer service from the local CommVault office. He reports, "With our previous backup vendor, we would call in with a problem and get the tech support desk. With CommVault, we get a higher level of support. The local CommVault staff took the time to become familiar with Cinemark's infrastructure as well as Cinemark's philosophies. This was important because not all solutions are necessarily the best fit for all scenarios. In addition, the local CommVault personnel maintain contact with Cinemark to ensure we're satisfied and alerting us to anything they know we may come across or need in the future."

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