

► Case Study: Lathrop & Gage

LATHROP & GAGE REACHES A VERDICT ON MODERN
DATA MANAGEMENT USING INTEGRATED SNAPSHOT
MANAGEMENT IN A VIRTUAL ENVIRONMENT

LATHROP & GAGE^{LLP}

Industry
Legal Practice

Corporate Headquarters
Kansas City, MO

Employees
500+

www.lathropgage.com



CHALLENGE


- Dispersed tape-based backup across 11 regional offices created placed an undue burden on remote and datacenter staff
- Backups and restores were unreliable
- Three separate products for data backups, virtual server protection and disaster recovery were costly to manage and maintain
- Virtual server protection was compromised by unstable snapshot management

SOLUTION

Commvault Simpana software with snapshot management, backup, recovery, deduplication and replication

BENEFITS

- Single platform with unified data protection enabled the elimination of disparate point solutions, saving time and money
- Dramatic improvement in backup reliability; granular restores of all files and data has boosted confidence and trust in data access and availability
- Administrative overhead reduced from 30 hours to two hours each week
- Virtual server protection has been elevated significantly; hundreds of virtual machines and dynamic workloads are supported seamlessly



Founded in 1873, Lathrop & Gage is considered the oldest continuously operating law firm west of the Mississippi River. Rooted on the heartland principles of honor, service, trust and value, the Kansas City-based organization still assists its first-ever client, today known as BNSF Railway Co. Now in its third century, the firm's attorneys remain committed to serving clients in the same unwavering manner.

According to BTI Consulting, a leading legal research firm, Lathrop & Gage is ranked among the top 30 firms in the country for client service and satisfaction. More than 750 employees, including 325 attorneys across 11 offices coast to coast, deliver a complete cadre of corporate legal services from business transactions and litigation to environmental law and wealth strategies. Dozens of its ranks are listed in The Best Lawyers in America and Chambers USA has rated several of the firm's practices as among the best in their regions.

The mission at Lathrop & Gage is for every client to achieve the best possible bottom-line result at the earliest possible date. To that end, the firm continually invests in the latest technology to expedite information between client-attorney teams, including an internal team capable of handling the production of electronically stored information (ESI). According to Todd Russell, lead network engineer for Lathrop & Gage, one of the best ways to demonstrate technology ROI is through the trust that attorneys and staffers place in its IT team's ability to safeguard vital legal data and client files. "There are no excuses when it comes to data protection," he explains. "Fortunately, with Commvault Simpana software, we never need one as everything works just as it's supposed to each and every time."

"We had issues with all our separate solutions, so performing backups and restores successfully was hit or miss. Snapshots hung frequently with Veeam and during an incident where we couldn't restore a virtual machine, their support also let us down."

DAVID ALBERICO
CO-LEAD NETWORK ENGINEER,
LATHROP & GAGE

► MANAGING DATA GROWTH IN A DISPARATE ENVIRONMENT

As Lathrop & Gage grew, adding offices in St. Louis, New York, Denver, Los Angeles and Chicago, it became increasingly difficult for the local teams to manage daily data backups and restores. Each regional site was chartered with performing its tape backups using Symantec Backup Exec, and then the results were shipped offsite. As the firm moved further in virtualization, Veeam was implemented for VMware backup and recovery. Double-Take software also was added for data replication.

Managing these disparate solutions burdened Lathrop & Gage's backup team, especially when performance and reliability problems impacted their ability to safeguard vital applications and data. Restores, in particular, were a growing problem as requested data often was missing or unaccounted for, which caused the team to lose confidence in its suite

of legacy solutions. “We had issues with all our separate solutions, so performing backups and restores successfully was hit or miss,” Alberico recalls. “Snapshots hung frequently with Veeam and during an incident where we couldn’t restore a virtual machine, their support also let us down.”

In struggling to fix all the recurring issues with its siloed approach to data protection, the team realized its backups were broken, despite countless hours troubleshooting daily problems. “We probably spent an entire day each week just cataloging and sending out tapes,” Alberico adds. “The time managing multiple solutions really added up.” Aside from the high cost of excessive administration, maintaining separate licenses and maintenance for the disparate line-up proved costly.

► CAPACITY LICENSING, SNAPSHOT MANAGEMENT & DEDUPLICATION PROVIDE POWER FOR ATTORNEYS

To alleviate the backup and recovery pain, Lathrop & Gage turned to Commvault Simpana software, which had been implemented on a smaller scale to support file-level backups for 10 file systems and continuous data replication to the firm’s disaster recovery site. Flawless performance, combined with Commvault’s capacity licensing agreement, opened the door to modern data protection, leveraging a single management console and unified platform for centralized snapshot management, backup, recovery, deduplication and replication.

Commvault’s capacity-based licensing, which offers a simple price per terabyte for the entire set of Simpana software capabilities, provides an affordable entry point and seamless growth path when compared to traditional, standalone backup and recovery software. Customers can change scope, scale and protection methods at will and for little additional cost or management overhead. It also provides unprecedented flexibility by enabling customers to focus on how best to protect their data regardless of client or agent and where the data is stored (e.g., deduplication, tape drives, storage arrays, etc.).


“For us, Commvault’s capacity licensing was the big break we were waiting for and it pretty much sealed the deal in building out with Simpana software,” notes Alberico. “This move fueled a major change in our environment as no matter what we had to backup, there is a Simpana solution for it.” Trusted storage partner Eagle Software Inc., a Salina, Kansas-based company that specializes in storage solutions, was called upon to help drive the Simpana software expansion, which included functionality and separate media agents for SQL, Exchange, Active Directory, NDMP, SharePoint, deduplication and replication.

Competitive Comparative: Commvault and Veeam¹

Simpana® software enables you to protect hundreds of virtual machines in minutes, and rapidly scale to protect thousands of VMs across the enterprise, but how does it stack up against competitors? Read more about Commvault’s unified data protection and information management solution.

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Together, the collective team installed Simpana software at the firm's datacenter; Dell DFS is used at regional offices to replicate file data back to the datacenter. Lathrop & Gage also was able to deploy a simple routine for sending auxiliary data copies offsite as part of the firm's disaster recovery plan. Additionally, Simpana software is used to manage the firm's hardware snapshots, while cataloging the content for granular recovery and automating deduplicated snapshot backups to the EMC SAN.

"We rely heavily on hardware-based snapshots to meet expectations for rapid application recovery," says David Alberico, Lathrop & Gage's co-lead network engineer. "We're snapshotting close to 80 percent of our environment and Commvault's Simpana software eases management and speeds recovery, all of which can be administered from a single console."

Lathrop & Gage leverages Commvault's Dedupe Accelerated Streaming Hash (DASH) copies to support its disaster recovery requirements by enabling an auxiliary data copy to be moved to multiple locations on different storage hardware with varying retention requirements. "Having one product with all the capabilities built in enabled us to replace all our point solutions with one consolidated platform," says Alberico. "As technology moves forward, we'll have the option to backup everything we've implemented—and that's a cool thing."

"Commvault software fits like a glove, no matter how you want to do it. Physical, virtual, it all works flawlessly."

DAVID ALBERICO
CO-LEAD NETWORK ENGINEER,
LATHROP & GAGE

► DEDUPLICATION AND SNAPSHOTS YIELD DRAMATIC TIME AND SPACE REDUCTIONS

Lathrop & Gage saw immediate improvements from its enterprise-wide Simpana software installation. Alberico now estimates that the weekly time to manage backups has been reduced from 30 to two hours per week. Arguably as important, however, has been the dramatic increase in the speed and reliability in which the backups are performed.

Previously, full backups took three or four days. With Simpana software, incremental backups are conducted at night and synthetic fulls during the day; 18-to-20 hours complete the cycle. Moreover, backups are retained for 30 days, which is easily accomplished with Commvault's embedded deduplication. According to the firm's storage policy, 300 TBs of data are reduced to 10 TBs of deduplicated snapshots, which are retained on the EMC SAN. "Commvault's dedupe is fantastic," adds Alberico. "We fit a large amount of backups in a small space."

Using Commvault's IntelliSnap technology, Lathrop & Gage has taken its virtual server data protection to the next level, safeguarding hundreds of virtual machines in minutes while accommodating dynamic workloads with ease. In fact, the team reports that Commvault's tight VM integration is one of its overarching advantages. "When we restore a virtual machine, Simpana software sees everything the vSphere client sees—the client, data store, power on—everything," notes Alberico. "It's very VMware friendly; we can restore anything, anywhere."

Streamlined, granular backups and restores are extended across Lathrop & Gage's entire environment. Restoring an Exchange file or folder requires just a couple of clicks; brick-level backups and Commvault's Exchange mining tool ensure the critical email system is backed up thoroughly—and everything can be recovered as needed. Backing up and restoring Active Directory, SQL databases and the NDMP library are equally fast and straightforward. "Once it's all set up, I leave it on autopilot and let it go," notes Alberico. "There's not a whole lot of maintenance. Now I don't have to spend time managing multiple solutions. You look at one console."

Thanks to Simpana software, Lathrop & Gage has optimized the benefits of snapshots and virtual server protection while taking advantage of truly unified data protection for its entire environment. The team has taken advantage of Commvault's "Virtualize Me" feature, which runs an automated physical-to-virtual (P2V) conversion starting from a system-state backup copy as the source and using any instance of VMware vSphere at the DR site. "Everything we put in production, Commvault has an answer for," says Russell. "Not a work-around or cobbled-together solution, but one that is seamlessly integrated and easy to manage, which gives us peace of mind."

Equally important is the ease with which Simpana software seamlessly integrates with Lathrop & Gage's EMC and Dell storage platforms. "Simpana software will pretty much work with anything as you can virtualize a physical machine easily and then move things around so you can build your infrastructure the way you want," says Alberico. "Simpana software fits like a glove, no matter how you want to do it. Physical, virtual, it all works flawlessly."

Commvault's support also gets high marks, which is yet another reason why Lathrop & Gage expects Simpana software to continue playing a pivotal role. "By going with Commvault, we replaced three products, saved money with capacity licensing and reduced our administrative overhead," concludes Russell. "But more than that, we now have 100 percent confidence when we tell our partners their data is protected and we can restore anything in our 30-day window. That's a huge trust factor—and you can't put a number on that."

Lathrop & Gage continues to invest in its overall IT environment, which is primarily Microsoft Windows-based and nearly 90 percent virtualized on VMware 5.1. Some 200 virtualized and approximately 15 physical servers reside at the firm's data center. An IT staff of 20 provides a full range of services while a three-member team oversees data backup and recovery for about 70 TBs of business-critical data encompassing a full suite of Microsoft applications, including Microsoft Active Directory, Exchange, SharePoint and SQL Server.

3 Signs Your Virtualization Strategy is Stuck in Neutral²

From the hybrid cloud to implementing a mobile data strategy, today's virtualization discussions take on many topics. The biggest challenge you may be facing is that your virtualization strategy just may be stuck in neutral. Read this whitepaper to find out if your company is at risk.

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Lathrop & Gage also maintains SANs from EMC and Dell EqualLogic while relying on Dell PowerVault MD1000 and MD3000 storage arrays to retain regular snapshots of crucial data and accommodate data growth, which continues at more than 10 percent annually.

The team also relies on Autonomy's iManage document management system, along with Whitehill Technologies and Redwood Analytics to support its accounting and business intelligence requirements. A variety of applications specific to the legal industry, such as LexisNexis' Concordance and Summation, assist with legal discovery and litigation support efforts.

▶ LATHROPE & GAGE AT-A-GLANCE

INDUSTRIES

- Legal

PLATFORM/FILE SYSTEM

- Microsoft Windows

APPLICATIONS



- Microsoft Active Directory
- Specialized legal industry applications

▶ RESOURCES

- 1 <http://commvau.lt/29SFDjG>
- 2 <http://commvau.lt/29YtHjf>

- ▶ To experience best-in-class VM Backup and Recovery, start your **FREE 30 day trial** at commvault.com/virtualization.

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