

Kalmbach Publishing Co. Ensures E-Mail Availability with Replay™ for Microsoft Exchange

Background

Kalmbach Publishing Co.'s magazines, web sites, and books cover a wide variety of special-interest and leisure subjects. Their goal of being the "leader in each of [their] fields" is greatly dependent on e-mail communication among its departments (sales, marketing, production, editorial and operations). Additionally, e-mail plays a pivotal role in communications with external parties, such as customers and distributors. Kalmbach's IT team cannot guarantee that critical e-mail messages won't get deleted or that Exchange won't experience unplanned outages. Their messaging infrastructure has too many 'moving parts'. But, by using Replay from AppAssure, they can recover any missing message – or the entire Exchange environment (in the case of a true disaster) – in minutes.

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— Alan Weiss
Network Engineer,
Kalmbach Publishing Co.

E-Mail is Mission-Critical

Alan Weiss, Network Engineer at Kalmbach Publishing Co., can remember a time when e-mail was just a nice thing to have. "As recently as eight years ago people used many forms of communication; the phone, regular mail, and faxes were all well-used alternatives," he says. "Now e-mail is an absolute necessity here. If we had an outage that lasted one minute, the help desk would light up like a Christmas tree. It's become critical to keep e-mail available and lessen the impact of any problem that might occur along the way."

In order to do just that, Weiss has turned to Replay from AppAssure. The company's Exchange Server and 300 mailboxes are all protected against a potential catastrophe, thanks to Replay.

Before using Replay, Weiss attempted to use a traditional backup product to restore messages and recover from e-mail problems. After quite a bit of work... it just wasn't working. So he began to look for a way to resolve e-mail loss and outage problems more efficiently, and with less heartache.

"We saw that Replay had a 30-day trial, and it was easy to request, download and install," Weiss remembers. "In just a week we had it running and were testing it in the lab. We deleted messages on purpose and then recovered them quickly. Replay is quite easy to use and doesn't require a lot of documentation because it's generally intuitive. It's so easy I'm able to just figure things out myself."



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No More “All-Nighters”

Since using Replay, Weiss hasn't had to recover from any e-mail disasters. He does remember one pre-Replay issue that required him to pull an all-nighter restoring Exchange data that had been corrupted by a hardware failure. “We thought we were fully protected with a RAID server, but we weren't, and I've learned that RAID just doesn't offer the protection you need when it comes to Exchange,” he says. “We had to deal with database rebuilds. It was an incredible pain.” Weiss quickly learned that backup technology does not provide disaster recovery and moved beyond relying solely on RAID.

Replay takes snapshots of every change across Kalmbach's entire Exchange environment every 15 minutes and checks the EDBs (Exchange databases) for corruption. “Those snapshots are great,” reports Weiss. “It's actually exciting to see a snapshot displayed with the infamous red 'X' depicting a potential problem – it lets me know Replay is there for me.”

With Replay in place, Weiss knows that recovering from any outage will be fast and that Exchange will be restored with very fresh data. “It's much better to be back online in minutes with your potential data loss no greater than 15 minutes versus working for 22 hours to do a bare metal restore and have lost 22 hours of data.”

AppAssure Brings “Easy” to Disaster Recovery

“Sometimes it seems like software developers don't really understand or use their own product,” says Weiss. “You can tell that AppAssure really does know and use Replay.”

While Weiss hasn't had to rely too heavily on AppAssure's technical support to get Replay going or to use the product, he has developed confidence in the engineering and expertise behind the product. “There was one time I couldn't recover a folder that had been deleted. I called AppAssure technical support and they helped me fix the problem right away. Another time, I mentioned that when I did a once a day back up for off-site storage I encountered some error messages. It turned out that they were a result of my configuration and did not impact the process – just a product of my backup running out of sync with the 15 minute snapshots. AppAssure completely understood what I was talking about and came up with a way to turn off the snapshots for a period of time. They make using Replay even easier.”

Now Kalmbach Publishing Co. has an affordable, easy-to-use system that provides total disaster recovery for their Exchange ecosystem. They can now use the backup system to make non-volatile copies of Replay's recovery points and move those off-site. They can rest easier knowing that fewer outages will occur over time, and when they do, they'll be back online in minutes. That means fewer calls complaining and more productivity for everyone.

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