

AppAssure makes Network Administrator “Hero of the Day”

Background

Imagine Schools operates 72 public charter schools that serve about 37,000 students. Schools are located in 12 states and the District of Columbia. While each school is independent and managed by its own administration and district; e-mail, school websites financial systems and student information databases are all the responsibility of Imagine Schools' central office in Arlington, VA.



A non-profit educational organization, Imagine Schools has to watch every penny. At the same time, its operations are as dependent on e-mail and SQL-based applications as any Fortune 500 company. That's why Rich Frangiamore, Corporate Network Administrator, and Matthew Noponen, Corporate Director of IT, are glad they've got AppAssure on their side.

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**– Rich Frangiamore
Corporate Network
Administrator,
Imagine Schools**



A Tough Start to a New Job

Rich Frangiamore is half of a two-person team that keeps Imagine Schools' central systems up and running. “E-mail is our biggest responsibility,” explains Rich. “We manage 3,300 mailboxes along with Imagine School's financial system, student information database, and school websites out of a central datacenter.” If something happens to those central systems, Imagine Schools across the country are affected.

Something did happen last year. Just weeks after Rich got to the central office to start his new job, the Exchange database suffered “an unrecoverable corruption.” “We were down for three weeks,” says Rich. “Our environment was not set up for high availability.”

Imagine Schools was conscientious about backups, but their solution was based on an off-site service in Massachusetts. “We had to ship a copy of our database down from our service provider and then work through it to...well, it took forever. That solution just didn't work. We hated it.”

Rich started looking for a better backup and restore solution for Imagine School's Exchange environment. His first stop was a failover/mirror application. “The first time we tried to fail over, our public folders broke. Everything got screwed up. It was a monumental waste of money.”

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Finding an E-mail Restore Silver Bullet

Not long after that disheartening episode, Rich and his boss Matt, heard about an AppAssure lunch and learn. They attended and decided that AppAssure for Exchange was what they needed. “It’s clear that everyone at AppAssure really wants to make a great product that works,” says Rich. “They don’t force feed AppAssure. They just say ‘Here’s how it works. You’re going to like it.’”

Rich did hit a few hurdles during implementation. His network card and “poor man’s SAN” – an iSCSI volume on a SAN – both posed problems. AppAssure’s support team helped Rich diagnose and fix issues. “Support was fantastic,” says Rich. “AppAssure really takes a vested interest in making sure that their software is running well.”

Right after AppAssure was implemented, Rich used it to avert catastrophe. “We have 3,300 mailboxes and wouldn’t you know, the first time I used AppAssure was to help the CEO. His Blackberry synchronization didn’t work and he lost his calendar. There’s a lot of important data in that calendar. I had the CEO’s assistant in my office yelling ‘He lost his calendar! He lost his calendar!’”

Rich followed the AppAssure wizard, found the CEO’s calendar in a recent snapshot, selected it, and thought “that was too easy.” “I went to the CEO’s desk, opened his Exchange calendar, and there was all the data. It was cool,” remembers Rich. “If that had happened a year before, we would have had to take the entire system down, ship down our backups, and spend days looking for and restoring the calendar. Instead, 5 minutes later, there he was, with his full calendar back in one piece. Needless to say, I was the hero of the day thanks to AppAssure.”

Hard Cost-Savings

Imagine Schools now relies on AppAssure to backup Exchange, SQL servers, and school websites. “AppAssure is so easy to use. It’s like navigating Windows Explorer,” explains Rich. “It’s just an agent and a console. It’s so flexible; I can restore a single message or an entire database with one click.”

Rich also appreciates AppAssure’s ability to check snapshots for problems and report that data is healthy. And, because AppAssure conducts those checks of its own snapshots away from the production servers, there’s no extra load placed on the Exchange server.

AppAssure is certainly helping Rich save time on backup and restoration. It’s also helping him save real money. “We used to spend what we paid for AppAssure on one month of backup service,” reports Rich. “With AppAssure we get all the benefits of that service and more with no ongoing fees.”

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