Voice of the Customer Report

Customer
Vertafore™

Vendor
FalconStor Software

Product
CDP

September 2009

Voices of IT

The INI Group Voice of the Customer Reports

IT professionals find real value in the experiences of other customers in order to help inform their buying decisions. The Voice of the Customer (VoC) program is designed to provide insightful information for IT professionals to understand different products and services. The INI Group is a consulting firm with expertise in data storage, disaster recovery, data management, security and virtualization and we work closely with our customers to provide the VoC service.

Background

The INI Group interviewed Chris Munoz, vice president of hosting services. This is how Chris describes his role:

"I'm the vice president of hosting services. I run the data center for the company, which is basically the operations end of our SAS (software as a service) delivery model; been with the company 14 years."

The following is an overview of Vertafore's IT environment:

- Five hundred servers
- Windows and Linux
- Thirteen hundred employees
- Seven hundred eighty terabytes of storage
- VMware

INI Group: Why did you decide to implement the FalconStor CDP?

Chris Munoz: What we were really looking for is data replication basically for disaster recovery purposes. Prior to bringing in FalconStor we were using a tape backup and restore method for moving our data to the disaster recovery site and as you know about tape - it's unreliable. Plus the amount of data was growing to a rate that really a tape restore was not really practical any longer.

INI Group: Can you share with us the process you went through to decide on implementing the FalconStor CDP?

Chris Munoz: Well we looked at several different vendors mainly on the array side. We were looking at array to array replication at the LUN level. We didn't really want to impact the host with the process and we looked at HP solutions, we looked at some EMC type solutions, although we'd didn't have any EMC frames we were just looking at different solutions out there. And then I came across the FalconStor solution, which was software-based and we tried actually another HP product a few years back that was software based; ran into some issues with the proof of concept and so I was a little leery but once we got it in and saw how easy it was to set up and how good it worked, we were impressed with the product.

INI Group: Did you replace any backup software or process with FalconStor CDP and if yes why did you make this decision?

Chris Munoz: We just changed the way we were doing backups, prior to putting in the CDP solution. We're a large SQL Server shop so we were doing a lot of SQL database dumps and then we would turn around and back those up to tape and this would cause longer backup windows and it would put strain on the host themselves because they were the ones transferring the data to the tape drives, and after putting the CDP in, we were able to do off-line backups basically not affecting the host at all and really helping us shorten our backup window during the weekend..

INI Group: Can you give us examples of how the FalconStor CDP provided real value to your company?

Chris Munoz: We first brought it in for data replication. But then once we got it in we realized that the reliability and stability gains we could get by putting the product in, really helped our overall uptime with our products. The solution we went with was the in-line solution with mirroring and replication of the mirror data but it's the mirroring that really added to the stability of our products with arrays having issues from time to time; us running in a Windows environment, it's very critical that the storage be always online and with the FalconStor solution if one of our arrays goes off-line, for whatever reason then it will just roll to the mirror and it really helps us with our up time.

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INI Group: Can you tell us how the FalconStor CDP has improved on the overall economic effectiveness within your IT operations?

Chris Munoz: Well, one of the things it's helped us do is really cut down on the maintenance windows for rolling out software. In my group we're responsible for applying all of the software releases to our SAS (software as a service) based products and prior to bringing in FalconStor, our maintenance windows were much longer. We had to perform SQL dumps in some cases, wait until those are backed up to tape before we actually start applying releases. In today's world with the FalconStor solution we simply just take a snapshot right before we start to apply the release so what used to take hours now just takes a few seconds.

INI Group: Can you give us any insights on FalconStor CDP that would be useful for other IT professionals considering this solution?

Chris Munoz: There's several different ways to run the FalconStor solution. That's what's really great about the product. You can start in a side-band solution or an in-band solution. I would really recommend the in-band solution. It gives you the best flexibility so you can choose whatever storage vendor you want underneath the scenes. The host doesn't need know that it's connected to a tier one storage array or tier two or tier three. It just knows that it's connected to the FalconStor appliance and then from there you can really spread the data across multiple different types of storage arrays.

INI Group: What are the next steps using the FalconStor CDP?

Chris Munoz: We're going to start using more of the DiskSafe product. We bought a few of those licenses and we started doing a little proof of concept and we're going to expand that a little bit more. Our primary goal bringing in the product was to protect our SQL servers. But now we're going back and looking to see what we can do to protect some of the Web servers that are not in band or not virtualized and possibly some client PCs.

INI Group: Would you recommend the FalconStor CDP to other IT professionals and can you tell us why?

Chris Munoz: Yes. It gives you the flexibility to really choose your storage underneath. You can bring in less expensive tier three storage and migrate data without the host even knowing that that's even happening.

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The INI Group provides expertise and experience in IT working closely with end users and vendors to provide real world experiences. The goal is to share insights and information first hand from IT professionals with their peers.

Voice of the Customer is a service provided by the INI Group using our experts to interview IT professionals directly. For more information go to www.VoicesofIT.com