Business As Usual

"Recovery is the one thing we can control."

- Marc A. Schauben,
Vice President,
Comprehensive Business Systems

The WD Sentinel™ S-Series powered by Intel® Xeon® processor E3 v2, keeps American Recovery Specialists working "business as usual"

Challenge: Sustain business as usual by keeping mission-critical data up-to-date and available for recovery in case of a disaster

Solution: Western Digital®'s WD Sentinel S-Series Storage Plus Server powered by Intel® Xeon® processor E3 v2 family with Microsoft Windows Server* 2012 R2 Essentials and Storage-Craft ShadowProtect* backup and disaster recovery software

Result: Recovered lost data and returned company to service in 12 minutes, with no delays and without the client realizing there was a failure, allowing them to continue "business as usual"

The IT Strategists

For more than 26 years, Comprehensive Business Systems has provided key IT services to small- and medium-sized businesses out of their Fort Lauderdale, Florida offices. "Essentially we provide our clients with support, IT strategy, virtual CIO services, and disaster recovery," says Vice President, Marc A. Schauben. "Primarily our clients are in the South Florida area, but we do take care of companies around the country and the world through remote management and support."

Central to Comprehensive Business Systems' service strategy is data protection. "I always tell my staff, 'recovery is the one thing we can control,' says Schauben. "I was here in 1992 when hurricane Andrew came through. I saw some businesses fail, because they didn't have good backup solutions. So, we can't prevent hurricanes that wipe out entire infrastructures for hundreds of miles around; we can't stop power outages or disk failures. But, we can be sure the data is safe, available, and recoverable. We can get our clients back up and running."

One such client, American Recovery Specialists, discovered just how quickly their data could unexpectedly disappear and how fast it could be restored with the right solution powered by WD Sentinel S-Series and the Intel Xeon processors E3 v2 family.

Not Just Any Repo Company

American Recovery Specialists has provided repossession services to financial organizations since 1992. The company's main office is located in Deerfield Beach, Florida with five satellite offices around the state. Ronald Keys is the company's Chief Executive Officer.

"Picking up a car is only a part of the repossession process," says Keys. "The other part is communicating with our field teams and the banks, reporting what we did and how we did the repossession, ensuring our information and processes meet compliance with the Consumer Finance Protection Bureau, securing data, and the like."

According to Keys, American Recovery Specialists comes under the same scrutiny as their financial clients, because the banks are now liable for the entire recovery process, including repossession. "That means we undergo audits by the banks for things like security, data protection, and recovery," says Keys. "And that all revolves around our information system. So, the technology that runs our business is mission-critical, and a huge risk factor if done poorly. We rely heavily on our technology," says Keys. "We're not your average repo company."

Any delay along the way, from internet outages, network failures, or if the email server is offline, results in lost revenue for both American Recovery Specialists and their financial clients. Repossessions have to be reported to the bank within 24 hours of recovery. The bank then has 48 hours to send redemption notifications to their clients. "If we can't get the background on the job to our field, and we can't get the information to the bank after repossession, then the bank can't get their information out to their customers. The bank risks the ability to collect the deficiency balance. So, our reputation and future business with the banks depend on the integrity and availability of our information system," says Keys.

A New Server in 12 Minutes

In late 2013, the company purchased new equipment to refresh their aging IT systems. Comprehensive Business Systems was just starting the migration, when early one morning, the Exchange Server running on an older machine failed. "That server contained all their client contact data and was a huge risk to American Recovery Services' business," says Schauben. "Delays meant lost revenue."

Fortunately, Comprehensive Business Systems recently evaluated the WD Sentinel S-Series storage plus server line of products. It was the first piece of new equipment they installed for American Recovery Specialists before starting the full migration. "It was the right choice and the right time to install it," says Keys.

"Normally, a recovery might take half a day or more to install the new hardware, build out the software, and restore and verify the data," says Schauben. "We had their Exchange Server recovered and on line in 12 minutes."
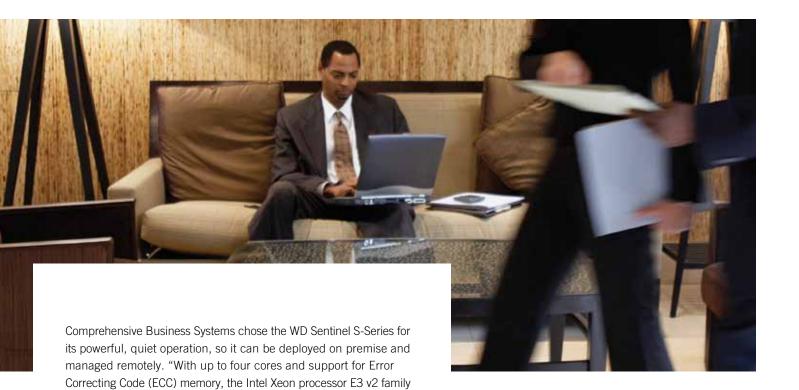
More than Just a NAS

The WD Sentinel S-Series is more than just a Network Attached Storage (NAS) and backup server, according to Schauben. "WD Sentinel Series is a true business-class server built on a server processor: the Intel Xeon processor E3 v2 family," he says.

The Intel Xeon processor E3 v2 family is ideal for small footprint servers, like the WD Sentinel S-Series, where performance and reliability are key requirements along with low power consumption. According to Steve Smith, Senior Product Marketing Manager for the Business Storage Solutions Group at WD, business customers know Intel Xeon processors are the industry standard for server performance and reliability, from ultra-dense data center platforms to large mission-critical and cloud services solutions and on-premise, multi-purpose business servers. "We wanted a powerful server processor for the WD Sentinel S-Series to do more than storage and backup," says Smith. "It needed to be able to run cloud and on-premise based line of business applications and yet quiet and energy efficient at the same time."

Jim Gregg, Director of Product Marketing of WD's Business Storage Solutions Group adds, "Western Digital used enterprise-class components, like the Intel Xeon processor, to build a new family of solutions for small businesses. The WD Sentinel S-Series is based on proven technologies from industry leaders and engineered for performance, reliability, and rapid deployment."

The system has up to 16 GB ECC memory (32 GB Max), up to 16 TB of storage, and redundant boot drives for high reliability. "The WD Sentinel S-Series includes data protection, like backup software," says Schauben, "but, more importantly, it's a true business server and comes ready to run out of the box with Microsoft Windows Server 2012 R2 Essentials. That means, besides running file services, it's powerful enough to run a host of line of business tools, like accounting, virtualization, cloud-based business programs like Microsoft Office 365,* and other software."

Comprehensive Business Systems chose the WD Sentinel S-Series for its powerful, quiet operation, so it can be deployed on premise and managed remotely. "With up to four cores and support for Error Correcting Code (ECC) memory, the Intel Xeon processor E3 v2 family enables reliable compute capacity in a very small footprint without the need for noisy fans," says Schauben. "That makes the WD Sentinel S-Series perfect for deployment in offices where its quiet operation is appreciated."

Comprehensive Business Systems chose to use ShadowProtect* software from StorageCraft for American Recovery Specialists'' backup and recovery strategy. "A couple of the great features of ShadowProtect," says Schauben, "is it can make incremental backups every few minutes and it can launch a backup image as a virtual machine. So, when American Recovery Specialists' Exchange Server went down, instead of opening up new hardware and going through a lengthy build process, we merely started up a new virtual server on the WD Sentinel and loaded the last backup image of American Recovery Specialists' Exchange Server. We did it all remotely, and a new server was back online in 12 minutes."

That gave the company the time to build the new Exchange Server hardware as part of the planned migration.

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"Marc called me early that morning," says Keys, "and let me know what happened. The server went down. They restored it. We never noticed a thing. It was business as usual."

"It's great to be the hero," says Schauben. "But, if the client doesn't suffer, then you've done your job better than they expected you to. And we couldn't have done that without the technology we put in place and the staff that manages it."

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