Law Firm Restores PCs in Two Hours vs. Two Days

Dibble & Miller uses WD Sentinel™ small office storage server to back up PCs and cut PC-restore time from two days to two hours. The firm now has enterprise-grade backup at a small-business price.

Sweating Bullets

PCs don't fail often at Dibble & Miller, but when they do, Dave Nickason sweats bullets. Nickason is the Legal Administrator at this Rochester, New York-based law firm of 25 employees, and he's also the firm's de facto IT support person. The firm previously performed nightly backups of its three servers, which contain critical user data, but it did not back up the customized settings on those PCs, including applications, passwords and other installed software programs. When a machine failed, it took Nickason two days to reinstall the operating system and applications.

"Earlier this year, we had two PCs fail," Nickason said. "One of them belonged to the firm's owner and the failure happened just hours before he was leaving on a trip. It was absolutely critical to get that machine up and running. Luckily, I was already using data protection software to back up his entire computer along with custom settings and applications, but those two experiences really gave me a scare and got me thinking seriously about client computer backup. No data is lost when one of our PCs fails, but the time needed to restore customized user settings is significant, and attorney time is expensive."

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Enterprise-grade Backup for Small Business

In fall 2011, Dibble & Miller began using a WD Sentinel DX4000 small office storage server, powered by the Intel® Atom™ processor, for client PC backup. Nickason set it up in less than an hour and quickly began the process of storing data and scheduling backups for the firm's computers.

"Most small-business storage devices top out at about 2 terabytes (TB), which is enough for client backup but not if you want to use it for other things," Nickason says. "The WD Sentinel model we chose included two drives and a total of four drive bays, so there's plenty of room for us to expand. Since it can store up to 9 TB of data, I'm thinking about backing up our server and PC data to the WD Sentinel, too. Additionally, I've already moved a large number of files from my computer and various other drives to the WD Sentinel because there is so much storage room on it."

WD Sentinel comes with enterprise-class drives with preconfigured RAID protection that provide higher data protection and redundancy than storage solutions with no RAID. This is valuable to Dibble & Miller because the firm's employees work almost around the clock from either home or the office. "If a non-RAID drive fails, I have to deal with it immediately," Nickason says. "WD Sentinel's built-in RAID protection gives me the flexibility to deal with a system failure tomorrow rather than right now. It provides an extra level of reliability for us."

Two-hour PC Restores

Now that the firm's PCs are protected by WD Sentinel, if a PC goes down Nickason can restore it much faster. He tested a full restore on a PC that had 500 gigabytes of data in a complex folder structure, and thanks to the speed of the Intel processor inside, the entire restore process was completed in less than two hours. "We don't have many PC failures, but in a small business without a full-time IT staff, any failure is a catastrophe," Nickason says. "With WD Sentinel, we can restore a PC in two hours rather than two days. And of course, a PC never fails when I'm sitting at my desk with nothing to do; it fails when I'm out of town or on a plane getting ready to leave, so there's a frantic rush. For us, WD Sentinel is an insurance policy that delivers significant peace of mind."

Compact Size and Price

WD Sentinel offers enterprise-class capabilities and storage capacity in a small-business form-factor and price. "I have WD Sentinel sitting on top of a filing cabinet, and it takes up no space at all," Nickason says. "It's a well-built, business-quality device with enterprise-grade drives. I'm backing up Windows® XP, Windows Vista®, and Windows 7-based PCs to WD Sentinel and haven't had a single problem."

Nickason calculates that it would cost nearly $3,000 to set up a software-based PC backup solution for the firm's 25 PCs. "Not only is the price of WD Sentinel more economical, but it requires far less management time," he says. "I don't have to buy, install, configure and monitor 25 separate backup programs; WD Sentinel includes the required software to back up the PCs and proactively alerts me if anything is out of order, such as the failure of a PC backup."

Nickason adds that he's also impressed by the block-level data deduplication capability of WD Sentinel. "After our first backup, I checked and rechecked the file size of three client laptops to make sure that the whole file was in fact there," he says. "It was amazing how small the backup file size was. Efficient compression due to WD Sentinel's deduplication capability means that we don't have to buy as much storage."