Sandy Alexander Advances Security of SaaS Apps and Hybrid Workloads with Sycomp and Druva

370

TB of data protected with Druva requiring little to no administration

520

Hours reclaimed a year, allowing them to focus on other IT projects

300

Google Workspace accounts secure and recoverable 24x7

About Sandy Alexander

Sandy Alexander is a marketing communications company whose roots are in traditional printing. Headquartered in Clifton, New Jersey, with three other locations across America. They've evolved into a multi-platform, multi-channel marketing communications company with wide-ranging capabilities that include CG studio services, digital printing, direct mailing, data driven marketing solutions, and retail visual merchandising.

The challenge

Justin Fredericks, Infrastructure and Systems Manager, is responsible for every aspect of IT at Sandy Alexander. He oversees numerous applications and services including Google Workspace, VMware virtual machines, databases such as Microsoft SQL Server and file servers. While many of these applications and services currently run on-premises, the company is beginning to migrate them to AWS as Sandy Alexander leadership wants to focus on capital investments and an OpEx model. In fact, the company's primary storage is consumed as storage as a service.

About 300 employees use Google Workspace for email, along with Google Drive and shared drives. When an employee leaves the company, Fredericks is faced with a challenge. He has a finite number of licenses to assign to users, so licenses need to be reused after an employee departs. However, Google retains a departed employee's data for a limited time. Once that time period elapses, the data is deleted permanently. That causes problems when a controller asks to see files or emails from former employees. Oftentimes, that data is simply not available.

Challenges

- Could not recover Google Workspace data and handle off-site backups with Quest's Rapid Recovery solution
- Using multiple tools to support data security efforts was unreliable and ineffective
- Switching to an OpEx model, Sandy Alexander needed a SaaS solution to support leadership's vision

Solution

- The Druva Data Resiliency Cloud offers a single pane of glass to manage the company's Google Workspace environment and VMware, SQL Server, and file server workloads
- Discovered Druva via Sycomp, and learned it could alleviate all key challenges
- Purchasing via AWS Marketplace allows for seamless purchasing and consumption

Results

- Air-gapped backup data and platform that can't be surrendered to ransomware
- 370 TB of data protected on the Data Resiliency Cloud with no administration required
- 10 hours per week saved on hardware and software administration
- 300 Google Workspace accounts are secure and recoverable 24x7, meeting compliance needs

The applications used to support Sandy Alexander's core business are spread over four data centers. These applications leverage VMware, SQL Server, and file server systems. Protecting this data required multiple solutions across every location. According to Fredericks, "We had all sorts of different things. We did use tapes for a while. We used some other backup products, especially at headquarters." The company used Quest Software's Rapid Recovery, but found that it had challenges, especially when it came to off-site backups.

Prior to choosing Druva, Sandy Alexander used a different backup as a service (BaaS) platform. However, that backup provider was acquired by another company. Fredericks was told to get the company's data off the previous BaaS platform, and this put IT back at square one for data protection.

Initially, the team tried to back up VMware workloads with the native VMware tool. However, backing up a file server with tens of terabytes of data proved to be tricky. Also, the VMware native tooling backs up every workload as a VM. This meant the team still needed to manually extract the application data, which wasn't the best solution either.

As Sandy Alexander grew via M&A activity, Fredericks inherited multiple data management strategies. For instance, some of the acquired sites simply backed data up to external drives. All of this became very difficult to manage, especially with limited resources. It took 10 hours of the team's time every week just to manage backups.

Fredericks is always working to improve Sandy Alexander's security posture. The company has annual SOC2 and HIPAA audits and is working toward HITRUST i1 assessments. The company had a minor security incident recently and luckily, the tabletop exercises they run prepared them for a quick recovery.

The solution

Sandy Alexander has a key partnership with Sycomp, a global technology and enterprise solutions provider. The partnership has many benefits for Fredericks and team, like supporting and managing the company's AWS investment. Additionally, Sycomp introduced the company to the Druva Data Resiliency Cloud.

Once Fredricks did a proof of concept with Druva and saw everything the platform provided, he realized nothing compared. According to Fredericks, "I don't think there's anything out there like Druva that lets me back up all those different things through a single pane of glass. It just makes everything so easy."

Now Fredericks protects all Google Workspace users with Druva. He's able to preserve users' email and drive data. This means if an employee leaves there is a copy of their data available, even if their license has been reassigned. According to Fredericks, "In the past I would just say, 'I'm sorry it's

deleted. I can't recover it.' Now, I have it preserved in Druva so I can recover the files. So, Druva definitely saved me there."

Fredericks now uses the Druva Data Resiliency Cloud to protect 370 TB of data. That includes VMware, Microsoft SQL Server, and file server data. According to him, "It makes it incredibly easy for my team – we back up everything with one product." Druva also fits the OpEx model that his management is driving. Fredericks says "Purchasing Druva through AWS Marketplace makes it easier to consume as well. Instead of paying for everything up front, we can accept our terms and just make monthly payments.''

Instead of trying to manually extract application data from full-VM backups, Fredericks can recover individual files. Druva has also helped improve SQL Server backups. The team performs both daily and transaction log backups giving them a recovery point objective of 5 minutes.
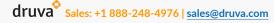
The results

Druva has also been a timesaver for Fredericks. He reports, "Now that everything's set up, I spend very little time managing it. It really is 'set and forget it'. I get reports emailed to me, but I don't worry about it because everything works. I don't have to go and troubleshoot anything, and I don't do a lot of restores. But when I do, it's very simple. I just go in, a few clicks, it just does its thing, and I go on to something else."

Fredericks has gone from spending 10 hours a week managing backups to hardly spending any time at all because everything works just as it should.

Druva has also helped Sandy Alexander strengthen its security posture by providing actionable intelligence. The company has made the air-gapped architecture of the Druva Data Resiliency Cloud part of its overall security strategy.

The Druva Data Resiliency Cloud is now protecting Sandy Alexander's data across multiple sites on one platform. Fredericks says, "Before Druva, we were having to use several vendors to achieve what we can with one vendor, Druva." Fredericks and team now spend less than an hour a week managing data.