

Leading Gold Coast hotel group designs new data back-up procedure to ensure customer satisfaction and protect business continuity

Reliable IT infrastructure is especially critical to businesses such as hotels which require constant access to bookings software, IP surveillance cameras, customer details and point of sale, to service customers and deal with incoming enquiries from different time-zones.

Group IT Coordinator for Gold Coast International Hotel (GCI) and Paradise Resort in Queensland, Richard Crighton, recently replaced a data storage and back-up system, which relied on tape, with a network-attached storage (NAS) device from NETGEAR.



Richard Crighton, Group IT Coordinator for Gold Coast International Hotel (GCI) and Paradise Resort.

The NETGEAR ReadyNAS device uses the more robust SATA disks -- removable hard-drives which can be used to store and back-up business information.

Richard is using the NETGEAR ReadyNAS appliance to automate back-up of critical data and facilitate quick re-store of data in the instance of network failure, to ensure customer information, security information and reservations are not lost, and business disruption is minimised.

To ensure the smooth running of the IT infrastructure at both hotels, Richard is on-call 24-hours a day to troubleshoot any problems. "If something goes wrong with the network, I get calls constantly until it is fixed. Technology is such a big part of our business."

Background

GCI and Paradise Resort are open for business 24-hours a day, receiving guests and taking bookings from interstate and overseas. Staff need access to systems and information quickly to answer customer questions, check-in guests and make new reservations.

The GCI network supports more than 60 users and Paradise Resort is used by 50 staff.

Richard was using a tape back-up system to ensure the protection of mission-critical data such as reservations information, customer details, security footage, sales/billing information and electronic room key programming. However, due to the potential for tape to corrupt, Richard wanted to move to a storage solution that was more resilient and easily expandable.

"I'm not a big fan of tape -- it can degrade over time, and if a tape back-up failed when we needed it the most, both businesses would be in a pretty bad situation. Just recently we have had a very small failure with tape -- luckily though, the ReadyNAS also stored a copy of the information that was needed. With a disk, if a particular file fails to back-up, for instance, I'm alerted straight away and can investigate and fix the issue, then re-run the back-up," said Richard.

Richard researched NAS appliances that automatically back-up and replicate data quickly, recognise a variety of different clients, alert the administrator of problems occurring during back-up, facilitate quick and simple re-build of PCs from stored images and rely on SATA disks.

SATA drives offer improved capabilities over tape back-up systems:

- can be hot-swapped -- when swapping disks for larger capacity drives, users do not have to turn off the power of the NAS first;
- can be expanded -- as the business grows, users can replace small capacity SATA disks with larger capacity disks;
- inexpensive to implement;
- very easy to install;
- supports mirroring of data, so if one SATA disk fails, data is not lost; and
- do not degrade like tape.

NETGEAR's ReadyNAS systems, which are available in box-like formation and rackmount design, have slots for two or four SATA drives and provide 500 and 750 gigabits or one, 1.5, two, three and four terabytes of storage.

ReadyNAS met Richard's criteria and use a technology called RAID, which allows multiple individual hard disks to be combined to perform as if they were one larger disk. The effect is to spread and replicate the data across the multiple disks (providing data redundancy). That, in turn, reduces the risk of losing data if one drive fails.

"I looked at several scenarios and the amount of mission critical data that needed to be stored, and decided to go with an appliance that was based on RAID technology, for peace of mind," said Richard.

Depending on how the disks are configured, RAID can provide a good level of data protection through redundancy. If a single disk fails, all the data will remain intact and accessible, and IT administrators are able to purchase a replacement drive. No single drive solution offers data redundancy, so when the drive fails, all data is lost. In that case, the only option is to find a firm that specialises in data recovery and there is no guarantee that all of the data will be recovered. Data recovery costs can also be very large.

The Implementation

Richard purchased two ReadyNAS 1100 Rackmount Network Storage devices with three terabytes of capacity, and installed one at each hotel. Richard uses a VPN (a secure link via the Internet between two computer networks) connection between the two hotels to remove back-ups of data from each site, supporting business continuity practices.



A picture of a NETGEAR ReadyNAS 1100 Rackmount Storage device.

Richard says the ReadyNAS appliances are so feature-packed that he is only using a fraction of its capabilities.

Andrew Crawford-Flett, Business Development Manager at Instant IT, supplied the ReadyNAS Rackmount units and has several more customers that have also deployed ReadyNAS devices. "Small-to-medium-sized businesses can plan a complete business continuity solution around ReadyNAS equipment.

"ReadyNAS suits SMBs because of its ease of deployment and management, data redundancy features and price-point. NETGEAR also has a well-established name in the market which reassures an SMB the equipment will be robust."

Richard explained the installation of the devices proved to be extremely straight-forward. "I was amazed how easy it was to install the ReadyNAS Rackmount devices -- they are basically plug and play. I'm not a big manuals person, so was impressed with the user interface -- it was just magic.

“Accessing data stored on the ReadyNAS is also very simple. It only takes a couple of seconds to transfer information from the ReadyNAS to a PC, as opposed to tape which took minutes to retrieve. I’ve also been impressed with how easy it is use the ReadyNAS as an archive platform.”

In the future, Richard plans to further use the VPN to connect the servers at each site and facilitate information sharing between the hotels.

About GCI and Paradise Resort

GCI is a five-star, high-rise resort, located 50 metres from Surfers Paradise beach. The hotel caters for holiday-makers and conferences with 296 rooms and conference facilities which accommodate 750 guests.



www.gci.com.au

Paradise Resort is a 3.5 star, five acre, 496-room family resort, which is located close to beaches, attractions and the heart of Surfers Paradise.



www.paradiseresort.com.au