

Public Utility Accelerates Data Protection

CUSTOMER

Public Utility

INDUSTRY

Energy

SOLUTION

Cobalt Iron Private
Cloud Solution

Two Cobalt Iron
Accelerators

BENEFITS

4x faster data restores

Eliminated tape cost
and management

Lower overall
solution cost

Accelerated issue
resolution

SMART.
SECURE.
AUTOMATED.

Customer

A public utility servicing residential, commercial, and industrial customers. This utility employs over 2,000 people and serves nearly 700,000 customers. The utility's energy centers generate more than 7,000 megawatts of electricity, and operate and coordinate 35,000 miles of transmission and distribution lines. They actively invest in the community to help preserve the environment, support non-profit agencies and encourage volunteerism among their employees and retirees.

Challenge

The utility had a long history with data protection goes back 20 years with servers backed up using Adstar Distributed Storage Manager (ADSM) on an IBM mainframe computer. Over time, they migrated to IBM's Tivoli Storage Manager (TSM).

Licensing choices and aging hardware eventually began to impact their ability to utilize essential features such as data deduplication and replication. IT staff were spending two to four hours a day just dealing with space issues. These shortfalls led to the search for a new generation, more scalable solution, which they found in Cobalt Iron Compass™.

The path we were exploring to upgrade TSM for enterprise licenses and to replace the aging hardware was very expensive in terms of both cost and time. They knew we had to replace our TSM servers and stay current with new capabilities on a continuous basis. While numerous solutions were evaluated there was a strong desire to retain their deep skills investment in TSM.

They needed a solution that would accommodate their existing backup capacities with room for future growth. They needed to comply with the strict government reporting regulations applied to public utilities. As a regulated utility, they must also comply with long retention requirements, respond to legal hold challenges, and satisfy all components of SOX regulations. Finally, the solution had to be cost effective to fit within their IT budget.

“Now, there’s a lot we can do with our data protection operations that we simply did not have the capability to accomplish before.”

Systems Engineer
Public Utility

Solution

Cobalt Iron Compass with two Accelerators was deployed for the utility. Nightly backups are completed at both the primary and secondary data centers then data is replicated between the two sites to produce two complete copies of the enterprise data. Data is now stored tape-free at both sites, meeting compliance and protection requirements. As a result, both the backup and recovery processes are significantly faster.

Impact

Deploying Cobalt Iron immediately eliminated the daily space management burden that the IT staff had been juggling.

The deployment architecture and optimized solution design provide data restores that are 4 times faster than the legacy solution. Previously, backups of primary data were stored in the secondary data center and vice versa. When restores were needed, data would have to traverse the network. Now restores are always local which is significantly faster. This is due to the architecture of the newly deployed solution, as well as, the Cobalt Iron engineering methodology which delivers significant efficiencies when compared to other solutions. Additionally, tape media was eliminated from the landscape which resulted in a savings of 91 hours annually in tape processing.

As a regulated utility, the company must comply with SOX and other regulations that mandate retention timeframes. Legal hold challenges require storing data longer than corporate policy would dictate and reporting requirements necessitate specific data be collected and retained over longer time periods. Cobalt Iron centralized policy management simplifies the management and monitoring required to meet these demands.

COBALT IRON CASE STUDY: PUBLIC UTILITY

“With Cobalt Iron we have dramatically increased the benefits we get from the money we spend.”

Systems Engineer
Public Utility

Total cost of ownership was another key to the utility’s choice of the Cobalt Iron solution. After reviewing the costs to purchase new servers comparable to the deployed Accelerators plus the licensing costs, the IT staff determined that building the systems internally would have been more expensive than the Cobalt Iron solution. The inclusion of on-going updates and maintenance in the product delivers additional savings and benefits since administrators won’t have to worry about server issues, upgrades, or how to expand storage in the future. “Our company did not dramatically change our budget for data protection, but with Cobalt Iron we have dramatically increased the benefits we get from the money we spend,” said one of their System Engineers.

The original data protection requirements included more powerful hardware, upgraded licensing for additional storage capacity, the ability to address reporting and compliance requirements, retaining their skills investment, and working within the existing IT budget. All of these requirements were met or exceeded by the Cobalt Iron solution. “Before deploying Cobalt Iron we had a list of issues and all of the frustrations that came with them. Backups are now happening and restores are much faster, “ stated an IT staff member, “We now have current features and functionality that we were not able to deploy before. With Cobalt Iron we can stop managing issues and turn our focus to exploring new features and capabilities.”