



Afognak Native Corporation Enrolls CommVault® Simpana® Software to Ensure Rapid Recovery, Efficient eDiscovery & Seamless Failover of Mission-Critical Data

QUICK FACTS

Industry/Solution:

- Native corporation that delivers IT, security, construction and training services to the Federal government.

Platform/File System:

- Microsoft Windows 2008 and 2003

Applications:

- VMware vSphere 4.0
- Microsoft Exchange, Active Directory, SharePoint, Lync unified communications, Operations Manager, Configuration Manager

Partner Hardware:

- Dell EqualLogic

Challenges:

- Outgrew legacy Symantec Backup Exec platform and began experiencing backup reliability problems
- Required elevated disaster recovery with full data center failover, especially given proximity to active volcanoes and earthquake threats
- High cost of bandwidth necessitated WAN-efficient data management
- Increasing need for data mobility and availability given highly distributed workforce
- Demands for simpler, faster searching and retrieval of data to meet legal discovery actions

Customer Profile

Afognak Native Corporation was formed in 1971 under a settlement between Congress and Alaska's indigenous people. Since then, the corporation has experienced aggressive growth, first as part of profitable timber development ventures on Afognak Island and then as a diversified business competing successfully in the government and commercial contracting realms.

In 1999, Alutiiq LLC was formed as a wholly-owned subsidiary of Afognak Native Corporation to provide a variety of services to the federal government, including security; logistics, operations and maintenance; information technology; construction and training. Today, the Alutiiq family of companies employs more than 5,000 people in all 50 states, several territories and countries worldwide.

According to Karl McLaughlin, senior vice president of IT for Afognak Native Corporation, rapid organizational growth has resulted in a geographically dispersed enterprise where unified communications and reliable data access are of utmost importance. "We started as a small company and have grown rapidly to encompass 36 offices and projects sites across the nation," he explains. "In my role, it's critical that all systems can speak together and are supported by a solid business continuity and disaster recovery

plan. With CommVault Simpana software, we have the ability to protect our most critical data while also assuring rapid recovery should something occur."

Data Management Environment

Afognak's 15-person IT team provides more than 1,000 knowledge workers with around-the-clock access to mission-critical ERP, project management and financial applications. The team also ensures that each division has the tools to accomplish its goals, which encompasses a full complement of Microsoft software, including Lync unified communications, which provides voice, data and video services. Microsoft SharePoint, Office, Exchange, Active Directory, Operations Manager and Configuration Manager have also been implemented.

Afognak relies heavily on VMware vSphere 4.0 to support its heavily virtualized environment, which gives the organization increased flexibility in responding swiftly to ever-increasing IT requirements. "Virtualization lets us respond rapidly if someone needs a server or resource," says Fred Berestoff, IT security manager for Afognak Native Corporation. "I truly value VMware as it gives us a lot of flexibility and lends itself to resiliency from a redundancy standpoint."

QUICK FACTS (continued)

Solution:

- CommVault® Simpana® 9 software with capacity licensing model and backup and recovery and archive modules.

Benefits:

- CommVault's source-side deduplication and DASH copies enable critical SQL financial data to be replicated hourly for heightened business continuity; this capability also has reduced bandwidth requirements
- Ability to recover data within 75 minutes beats two-hour recovery time objective
- Efficient, end-to-end eDiscovery provides legal staff with a competitive edge
- Simpana Archive enables older data to shift to lower tiers of storage while freeing up much-needed primary storage capacity
- CommVault's seamless integration with Microsoft's Windows Azure cloud platform accommodates mobility and availability demands
- Elevated disaster recovery and business continuity produce peace of mind

Currently, Afognak has 160 virtual servers and approximately 35 physical file servers, with plans to virtualize its servers whenever possible and deploy physical servers only as requirements dictate. For disaster recovery purposes, the company balances server loads between East and West Coast locations and leverages a highly resilient network to ensure maximum system uptime.

Dell EqualLogic storage also plays a major role in Afognak's virtualization and data protection strategies. The company uses EqualLogic iSCSI storage arrays to store approximately 7 TBs of crucial file and application data across five locations: the main data center in Anchorage, its East Coast hub in Chesapeake, Va., and smaller data centers in Charleston, S.C., Huntsville, Ala. and Denver, Colo.

Additionally, Afognak requires the ability to move business operations quickly in the event of a manmade or natural disaster, especially given the threat of earthquakes and four active volcanoes in proximity to the company's Anchorage data center. "Because of where we are, the premise of a huge natural disaster is quite real," notes Berestoff. "For that reason, we have to be able to stand up critical applications in another location to ensure seamless business operations no matter what."

DR Drives Data Protection Demands

The overarching need to bolster business continuity was the primary driver in seeking an enterprise-class solution after Afognak had outgrown its legacy Symantec Backup Exec platform. Accelerated business expansion had overtaxed the product, which had performed sufficiently when the company was smaller and backup only was required. As Afognak grew and systems got larger,

however, the team was forced to contend with up to 18 individual Backup Exec builds, which became unwieldy to manage.

Afognak also suffered from the lack of a centralized view of its environment, as it became increasingly difficult to see what was happening across the network. As a result, the team experienced technical hurdles, which caused them to lose confidence in Backup Exec. Challenges with technical support only exacerbated the situation and reinforced the team's conviction that it was time to step up to a more robust platform with single, truly unified management console.

Not only did Afognak need to keep up with rapid business growth, there was the challenge of stringent recovery time objectives of two-hours for all essential data, regardless of location. Additionally, the company grappled with bandwidth concerns, which is a universal problem for Alaska-based businesses as such costs are much higher than elsewhere in the nation. Another major consideration was finding a way to consistently complete application failovers, as previous attempts had been met with various levels of success. For that reason, the company was looking for ways to improve business continuity while increasing WAN efficiency. "Our biggest challenge is bandwidth," says McLaughlin. "We needed to minimize what's going over the network without compromising our disaster recovery objectives."

Another mounting concern with the legacy solution was the difficulty encountered whenever Afognak's legal department requested access to data to accommodate an eDiscovery request. "Our discovery process was cumbersome and we realized there had to be an easier, faster process for indexing and searching data across the enterprise," Berestoff says.

CommVault Comes Out on Top

In evaluating enterprise-class solutions, Afognak sought centralized backup and recovery across its dispersed locations, deduplication for reducing network traffic and enhanced disaster recovery functionality. The company sized up IBM Tivoli Storage Manager, Symantec NetBackup and CommVault® Simpana® software, carefully reviewing each vendor's capabilities and product road-map. In particular, Afognak preferred a software-based approach to deduplication as this avoided vendor lock-in and they felt deduplication software would be more efficient in its distributed environment.

Afognak especially liked CommVault's embedded deduplication technology, which included both target- and source-side deduplication. With source-side dedupe, Afognak could optimize its network infrastructure because redundant backup and archive data could be eliminated at the client, before sending it over the network. In fact, CommVault's source-side deduplication typically moves only one-tenth the data of target-based approaches, which was very appealing.

Another plus for CommVault was its modern data management platform, which would enable Afognak to take advantage of a single, unified solution to intelligently manage, protect, search and retrieve data from a single console. Because Simpana software modules share a common set of back-end services, they can effortlessly talk to one another through the unified platform,

which simplifies operation and produces significant backup, recovery, deduplication, archive, replication and search efficiencies.

On top of these advantages, CommVault's capacity licensing agreement gave Afognak greater flexibility by offering a simple price per terabyte for the entire set of Simpana software modules. "The tipping point was CommVault's capacity-based licensing," Berestoff says. "There were so many things we weren't doing because we didn't have the capability, but Simpana software gave us the opportunity to do so much more because of the platform's evolution and the ease with which we could access everything."

According to McLaughlin, CommVault also presented a broader data management vision, which gave Afognak the confidence that Simpana software would best accommodate the company's current and emerging business demands. "Simpana software is so much more than a backup and recovery product—it's a true data management solution with a lot of add-on functionality," he continues. "Capacity licensing let us open up and try out new features, like source-side deduplication and eDiscovery, in one all-encompassing platform."

CommVault Delivers a Competitive Edge

Afognak first deployed Simpana 8 software and reaped immediate, dramatic improvements in backup and recovery. An upgrade to Simpana 9 unleashed new functionality that enabled the team to

take a quantum leap forward with rapid recovery, accelerated eDiscovery and unprecedented flexibility in supporting its widely dispersed environment.

Afognak leveraged source-side deduplication to achieve impressive reductions in data while eliminating hardware requirements. Then, the company added CommVault's highly innovative Dedupe Accelerated Streaming Hash (DASH) capability, which is an extremely efficient way to make and send additional copies to a secondary site or across a WAN for expedited recoveries. With DASH copies, only changed blocks of data are moved across the network, which makes it ideal for stringent RTO and disaster recovery scenarios. The fact that DASH is optimized for WAN transfer means the team can create multiple copies for disaster recovery purposes without impacting network performance.

"With CommVault's DASH technology, it only takes about five minutes to make the copies, so we can replicate critical SQL financial data on an hourly basis now," explains Berestoff. "With previous failover solutions, it would take a couple of hours to do the nightly synch, so there's no comparison with DASH copy."

Equally impressive is Afognak's ability to restore this financial data using Simpana software. Full recoveries can be completed in 75 minutes, which enables Afognak to beat its two-hour recovery window. Moreover, the company has utilized the new functionality while decreasing its bandwidth requirements

for data protection. This has been especially helpful given Afognak's heavy use of video conferencing across its major locations. "Simpana software is incredibly WAN efficient," notes Berestoff. "We've been able to do more with less bandwidth. We're replicating data with a regular Internet connection, so we're not breaking the bank with our bandwidth costs."

Thanks to Simpana software's deduplication and compression features, Afognak now can retain more vital information on disk for two weeks before migrating to tape. The company also is investigating the opportunity to move data into the cloud as part of its ongoing investment in Microsoft technologies. CommVault's seamless integration with Microsoft further extends Afognak's unified data management capabilities, enabling the company to move on-premises backup and archive data securely, reliably and transparently into, and out of, Microsoft Windows Azure cloud platform. "We think that cloud storage is a good fit for our mobility and availability demands," McLaughlin adds. "CommVault's integration with Microsoft Windows Azure will make it easy for us to take Simpana software right along with us as we move data there."

Another area where Afognak is poised to reap the benefits of Simpana software is efficient, end-to-end legal discovery. The company engaged CommVault's professional services team to assist with implementing Simpana Archive with content indexing to facilitate proactive legal discovery while reclaiming much-needed primary storage space. "With Simpana software's archive and search functionality, our eDiscovery efforts are much more efficient, which gives our legal department a clear competitive edge," says McLaughlin. "Additionally, the opportunity to shift older data to our archive tier frees up primary storage capacity for other offices."

The Afognak team looks forward to leveraging other Simpana software features. In particular, Simpana software's edge data protection solution could prove instrumental in supporting the company's many road warriors. "CommVault's ability to safeguard data residing on remote desktops and laptops will enable us to support our highly mobile workforce in the best way possible," says Berestoff. "Simpana software's edge protection solution will change how we protect them."

In looking ahead, McLaughlin believes that CommVault's modern approach to data management will continue to transform how Afognak operates and reinforce the company's overall competitive edge. "CommVault's modern data management solution empowers us to collaborate and communicate in real time with all our offices," concludes McLaughlin. "We can protect, find and produce data much faster and easier than ever before while better utilizing our storage to save budget dollars on hardware and administration. Best of all, we have complete peace of mind at a DR level as we know our data is safe with Simpana software."



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