

Architecting Cyber Resilience: Ayers Saint Gross + Druva

10+

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133TB

Of NAS, file server, and VM data secure and recoverable 24x7

About Ayers Saint Gross

Ayers Saint Gross is an interdisciplinary design firm of 200 architects, planners, landscape architects, interior designers, graphic designers, and space analysts. They work with clients around the world to create places for shared knowledge and culture. They engage people and places to create designs that enrich the world.

The challenge

Jon Eaton, CIO at Ayers Saint Gross, has a focus on both IT and security. He stays involved with the organization's backup and disaster recovery processes because he sees them as critical to cyber security and disaster recovery.

The organization was using tape backup and a separate solution to back up their data to the cloud. However, Mr. Eaton reports that "The administration of both solutions was extremely painful. Tape backups required lots of hands-on work and time to restore data. There was also the added expense of tapes onsite and in storage."

While the speed of cloud backups was better, the five-person team was spending 10-12 hours a week just making sure backups were running successfully. To make matters worse, restore times were poor. And even though version control was available, it was still tough to get the data if needing a point-in-time restore. Also, there was still the cost of building infrastructure to support cloud backups.



Challenges

- No reliable restore for essential point-in-time recovery across their data
- Previous backup process was tedious and time-consuming across multiple products
- Retention requirements for architectural data required reliable backups

Solution

- A single pane of glass to protect data center data, Microsoft 365 data and end-user devices
- Previous ransomware attack tightened the requirements for an immutable and air-gapped backup solution
- Simplicity and scalability are key features for the lean IT team

Results

- 10+ hours saved per week on managing backups since switching to Druva
- 133TB of NAS, file server, and VM data secure and recoverable 24x7
- Reliable restoration gives confidence that retention requirements will be met in the future

Recovery problems even impacted executives. Mr. Eaton was using laptop backup software, but during recoveries, the software often failed at about the 50% mark. The problem was so bad that Eaton's team had to tell many employees not to expect files on their laptop hard drives to be backed up. Not long after, a dangerous cyber event occurred.

Soon after Mr. Eaton started at Ayers Saint Gross, ransomware infected the C-drives of 15 to 20 desktops. Mr. Eaton shared, "Because of this attack, it became clear that we needed to back up more of the desktop and documents on laptops and that the user couldn't be a local admin on the machine anymore."

Since Ayers Saint Gross is an architectural firm, they must abide by the retention policies set forth by the State of Maryland and the AEC (Architecture, Engineering, and Construction) industry for construction documents. That means those documents must be available for the entire retention time for litigation and liability reasons. According to Mr. Eaton, "The data retention policies we have to comply with means we must have a good and reliable backup solution in place."

Additionally, when Ayers Saint Gross began to use Microsoft 365, Mr. Eaton knew he'd need to find a backup solution to safeguard this key project collaboration data.

The solution

After consulting with their technology partner, Electronic Data Solutions, the Druva Data Resiliency Cloud came highly recommended. Mr. Eaton shared, "Electronic Data Solutions is a local partner that even fills in when I'm on vacation. One day they asked me, "Why aren't you guys just using Druva for your file servers?" Since then we haven't looked back."

Mr. Eaton chose the Druva Data Resiliency Cloud to meet several needs at Ayers Saint Gross. They started off protecting the end-user devices, then their hybrid workloads – VMware, Hyper-V, Windows, and NAS devices, then some more end-user devices, and finally Microsoft 365.

The scalability and simplicity of Druva's SaaS solution are key reasons Mr. Eaton and the IT team love having it in their tech stack.

The results

They were able to implement Druva in 2020. Luckily, the team was able to protect all laptops before COVID-19 restrictions went into place. As Mr. Eaton puts it, "Fortunately, my team

and I had moved our firm to mostly laptops by the time the pandemic hit. And so when COVID-19 came and we went fully remote, the reliance on the laptops became much heavier." Druva was there to protect the endpoints, even when people were not in the office.

Everything went smoothly after the switch to Druva for protecting end-user devices. Because of this, and since they trusted the recommendation of Electronic Data Solutions, Mr. Eaton made the decision to use Druva to protect their on-premises data center. Mr. Eaton says of the decision: "We decided we're going to do the data center and get away from the hands-on activity and remove ten to twelve hours of work every week."

Mr. Eaton's job of justifying the budget required to deploy Druva to protect the firm's data did not require a hard sell. Since their challenges with ransomware seven years ago, the entire organization has been educated about the importance of protecting data to survive another attack. The organization understands what offsite and immutable air gap backups are now, and those are core to Druva's solution.

Mr. Eaton said when he purchased cyber insurance, he had to answer questions such as: "Do you back up regularly? Is your backup offsite or is it immutable?" According to Mr. Eaton, "Having Druva in place ensures we meet regulatory requirements and have insurance to protect the firm in the long run. Druva's importance has visibility up to my CEO and COO."

Druva has been able to address the data protection problems at Ayers Saint Gross. In the end, Mr. Eaton said, "Druva built a strong, lasting relationship through support, non-pressure sales, and a positive experience that led us on a journey to grow our backup and disaster recovery solution into a broad platform to protect all of our data assets."

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