HP helps real estate service firm house data with enhanced security solutions

StorageWorks platform also cuts backup times and improves business continuity

Landata Systems, Inc.

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– Kash Mahmud, Disaster Recovery Engineer, Landata Systems, Inc.

Business need:
Real estate transactions often generate bushels of paperwork – including mortgage, insurance, tax, and home inspection documents. In recent years, lenders, brokers and other participants have attempted to streamline the paperwork-handling burden by using the Web and electronic-document scanning. This push toward "paperless" real estate transactions placed new strains on the data protection and business-continuity infrastructure at Landata Systems, Inc., a software developer and technical services provider to the title-insurance and real estate markets.

Solution overview:
To bolster its data protection and business resumption resources, Landata chose to both strengthen and extend its HP storage architecture. The company's business-continuance team evaluated storage alternatives from StorageTek, ADIC, Quantum and HP. Landata selected HP StorageWorks and HP OpenView solutions, including the StorageWorks Enterprise Systems Library E-Series tape library, StorageWorks 5000 Enterprise Virtual Array, StorageWorks Continuous Access EVA, and OpenView Storage Mirroring.

Real estate, real data demands
Landata Systems is a wholly owned subsidiary of Stewart Information Services Corp. (SISCO), a global real estate information services firm that provides title insurance and related information services through more than 7,000 locations in the United States and abroad. Landata not only furnishes IT-management services to its parent company, but also to SISCO client firms through an application service provider (ASP) model.

One of the critical services Landata provides to internal and external customers is data management, including storage, archiving, and business-continuity protection. Landata and SISCO are long-time HP customers, with nearly 500 HP ProLiant servers powering critical applications. Most of these IT assets are located in the firm's primary data center in Houston.

The drive to promote paper-free real estate transactions resulted in a rapid increase in data storage demands from SISCO agents and customers. Stewart Mortgage Information (SMI), another SISCO subsidiary Landata serves, specializes in providing solutions that accelerate loan origination and reduce post-closing costs.

Backups in need of renovation
Among the capabilities SMI furnishes to its clients are high-speed, document-image-scanning services. Each new SMI customer can generate multiple terabytes of document-image data. In many cases, this data is sent to Landata for safekeeping. In early 2004, the combined data-storage demands of internal SISCO IT and external ASP clients led Landata to search for a more robust backup and business-continuity strategy. At that point, SAN backups using Landata's old tape libraries were taking 12 hours for differentials and 48 hours for fulls. In addition, each new backup generated a multi-page error report showing that 12 percent of backup jobs were failing.

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To Landata Network Administrator Randy Samora, the situation had become unacceptable: "We knew we needed to do something to remedy the situation. With new data transmissions and new applications coming on line, we really needed to focus on creating a pain-free backup strategy and continue to build a more robust business-continuity infrastructure. We began looking at a new primary storage architecture – along with co-location strategies for disaster recovery and business continuance."

Landata was already using HP storage arrays in a SAN configuration, including an HP StorageWorks 5000 Enterprise Virtual Array (EVA5000) equipped with 25 TB and a StorageWorks 12000 Enterprise Modular Array with 6 TB. The Landata storage and business-continuance team determined that the firm's immediate need was for a high-performance library, capable of handling backups for both SAN systems. The group evaluated libraries from ADIC, Quantum, StorageTek, and HP in order to find one library capable of consolidating three older libraries.

The Landata team was drawn to the high storage density and performance the HP StorageWorks ESL712e tape library offered. "We needed a library that could handle traffic from multiple sources," Samora says. "The HP StorageWorks ESL tape library offered everything we needed, including scalability and automated operation. In addition, HP Services got us up and running quickly, and have supported us at every step. Time savings and reliability have been two major benefits for us."

According to Samora, the HP StorageWorks ESL712e, installed in the summer of 2004, cut the time required for both full and differential backups by approximately 50 percent. In addition, the time savings on full weekend backups resulted in enough time for an additional daily

differential on Sundays. "We believe we may even be able to eventually squeeze our full backups enough to allow a Saturday differential as well," Samora notes. "Additional daily differential backups will mean it will take less time to recover files and systems in the event of data loss or some sort of disaster."

Location, location, location for data replication and remote recovery
At about the same time the business-continuance team was looking for a new enterprise-class library, it was also investigating co-location sites for data replication and remote recovery. The team chose a site located within 30 miles of Landata's Houston headquarters. The team also decided to outfit the new co-location site the same HP storage solutions in use at headquarters.

In March 2005, HP Services installed an HP StorageWorks EVA5000 equipped with 8 TB of storage and an HP StorageWorks ESL712e enterprise tape library at the Landata co-location site. The new storage solution links to Landata headquarters via Coarse Wavelength-Division Multiplexing (CWDM) optical fiber, providing two 1 GB Fibre Channels and 1 Gbit Ethernet bandwidth.

Landata will soon begin replicating critical data between its headquarters HP EVA5000 SAN and the EVA5000 SAN at its co-location center using HP StorageWorks Continuous Access EVA software. Continuous Access EVA provides a single interface for full, remote, replication management to help reduce recovery time following planned or unplanned outages.

According to Landata's Disaster Recovery Engineer Kash Mahmud, the firm's goal is to be able to recover critical applications in less than 24 hours and all other core applications within two to three days following a major

interruption. "As a result of the 9/11 attacks, we realized that in the event of a truly major disaster, you may not be able to simply jump on a plane and travel to a remote recovery site," Mahmud explains. "We chose a co-location site within driving distance so our business-recovery team members will be near their families, but also close enough to get to the recovery site."

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>
> – Kash Mahmud, Disaster Recovery Engineer, Landata Systems, Inc.

State and federal regulations are also a major consideration for Landata and its customers. "Because a key focus of our business is title insurance and other insurance-related issues, the state and federal governments require those applications to be available for many years, and within a few hours after an interruption," emphasizes Mahmud. "HP has helped us take a big step toward implementing a truly integrated Information Lifecycle Management (ILM) strategy."

A "mirror" would go great right here…
With the help of HP Services, Landata also conducted proof-of-concept tests of HP OpenView Storage Mirroring software, and expects to use the solution for replicating non-critical data from headquarters to the co-location site via an IP wide-area network (WAN). The software runs on an HP ProLiant DL380 server under Microsoft® Windows® Server 2003.

"We will use HP OpenView Storage Mirroring solution for software-based replication of data from our Windows-based applications," Mahmud says. "The HP solution allows multiple systems to move data simultaneously to our off-site location." Transmission speed, system utilization, continuous data protection and rapid resumption of data with minimal engineer intervention have been critical test factors."

Landata is also in the process of upgrading its headquarters EVA5000 SAN with an additional 10 TB of storage to accommodate increased demand by SISCO clients and agents. In addition, plans are in the works to use the co-location site, including the second EVA5000 SAN as a co-production site for expanded IT operations.

"Our HP storage solutions will allow us to replicate data in real-time; enable us to meet our goals for faster, automated backups; and yield better disaster reliance and business-continuity capabilities," Mahmud concludes. "By standardizing on HP solutions, we are confident that we can meet the needs of our internal and external IT customers."

About Landata Systems
Landata Systems, Inc. (www.landatasystems.com) is a software developer and technical services provider to the title insurance and real estate industries, offering excellent software development, consulting and support. Products offered include: order entry, document preparation, closing and escrow accounting, online underwriting and real estate information, imaging, title plant, and electronic commerce.

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At a glance

Hardware:
- 2 HP StorageWorks ESL712e E-Series tape libraries with Ultrium 460 drives
- 2 HP StorageWorks 5000 Enterprise Virtual Array (EVA5000) systems configured as SANs
- 2 HP StorageWorks 12000 Enterprise Modular Arrays (EMA12000)
- 280 HP ProLiant DL360 G3 and G4 servers
- 100 HP ProLiant DL380 G3 and G4 servers
- 100 HP BladeSystem p-Class server blades

Software:
- HP StorageWorks Command View EVA
- HP StorageWorks Continuous Access EVA
- HP OpenView Storage Mirroring
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2003
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000
- Microsoft Windows Server 2003
- Veritas NetBackup

HP Services:
- Implementation and training
- Ongoing service and support
- Proof-of-concept demonstration project

Challenges

- Meet backup demands for corporate and client data

- Improve system performance and manageability

- Meet regulatory and audit team requirements for data protection and business continuity

- Improve ability to adapt quickly to markets and client needs

Solution

- Strengthened and extended Landata's storage architecture with HP StorageWorks and OpenView solutions.

- Deployed HP StorageWorks ESL712e tape libraries, StorageWorks 5000 Enterprise Virtual Array-based SANs, and Continuous Access EVA software at headquarters and co-location sites.

Results

- Enhanced data security and business-continuity preparedness

- Improved ability to easily accommodate new business

- Cut time required for full backups by 50 percent

- Reduced backup error rate from approximately 50 percent to less than one percent

- Added one additional daily differential backup, providing greater data protection and further reducing file recovery time

- Virtually eliminated daily error reports

- Gained single-point control of storage resources

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