



SonicWALL

Northern Gateway schools ease disaster recovery with Dell SonicWALL

Using CDP 6080, Northern Gateway Public Schools centralize backup and recovery of distributed data and applications



Customer profile



Company Northern Gateway Public Schools
Industry Education
Country Canada
Users 6,020
Website www.ngrd.ab.ca

Challenge

- Unreliable tape-base backup
- No disaster recovery in place
- Complex, costly and inefficient backup operations
- Client/server and database application recovery
- Government policy mandates

Solution

- Dell SonicWALL Continuous Data Protection 6080
- Dell SonicWALL Continuous Data Protection 5040

Benefits

- Automatic disk-based backup and recovery for multiple distributed workstations and server applications
- Policy-driven, user-transparent backups of multiple versions of files and applications
- Capacity from 4.5-9 TB (at 2:1 compression), flexible disaster recovery options, RAID 5, and replaceable drives and power supplies
- Backup and recovery of Exchange and SQL databases
- Optional local archiving, offsite data backup, site-to-site data backup, and bare metal recovery of entire systems onto original, virtual or new Windows® or Linux® devices

“CDP can really make a cost difference.”

Malcolm Heaven
Network Administrator

Northern Gateway Public Schools provides K-12 students with a quality education in a dynamic and respectful environment. Based in Whitecourt, Alberta, Northern Gateway's facilities range from an 11-student one-room schoolhouse to a 700-student high school.

Dell™ SonicWALL™ Continuous Data Protection (CDP) delivered Northern Gateway a comprehensive and cost-effective backup and disaster recovery solution.

"I'm very confident in our CDP solution. It lets us see what is backed up every day, and its disaster recovery capabilities give us the flexibility to implement the disaster recovery strategy that best suits our needs."

*Malcolm Heaven
Network Administrator*

The challenge: secure and reliable backup

Northern Gateway's IT department manages network data and applications on 93 servers, supporting approximately 5,600 students, 70 administrators, and 350 faculty members distributed among 26 school sites in central Alberta. Previously, Northern Gateway had used tape-based backups at individual sites, but had found them unreliable.

"Sometimes the tape systems didn't work," said Malcolm Heaven, network administrator at Northern Gateway. "Once, two employees spent several days trying to locate missing information."

Heaven required a comprehensive backup and disaster recovery solution that could protect vital school records with increased reliability, streamline administration, easily track what has been backed up, and comply with government policy regulations.

"Our biggest vulnerability across all school sites was the lack of disaster recovery to safeguard our school records from a site disaster or a severe hardware failure," said Heaven.

To select the best solution, Heaven consulted Calgary-based Office Solutions Inc. (OSI), who provides Northern Gateway with technical solutions for backup and recovery, network security, and collaboration. After extensive user interviews, a comprehensive audit of

Northern Gateway's requirements, and comparative solution testing, OSI recommended Dell SonicWALL CDP.

"We understood Northern Gateway's infrastructure and geography, and we understood the power of CDP," said Bill Stewart, vice president, professional services at OSI. "CDP offered easy deployment, management and recovery, along with reliable performance and support."

The solution: Dell SonicWALL CDP 6080 and CDP 5040

Acting upon OSI's recommendation, Heaven deployed a Dell SonicWALL CDP 6080 appliance at the central office, which, in turn, automatically aggregates backups from CDP 5040 appliances that he deployed at the school sites. The Dell SonicWALL CDP 6080 is ideal for distributed organizations like Northern Gateway that demand higher performance and capacity. Delivering automatic disk-based backup, as well as recovery for multiple workstations and server applications, the CDP 6080 offers capacity from 4.5-9 TB (at 2:1 compression), flexible disaster recovery options, RAID 5, and replaceable drives and power supplies.

"Setting up the CDP was simple and right out of the box," said Heaven. "Configuring the management console and creating backup policies was very easy."

The low-touch CDP 6080 automatically enforces policy-driven, user-transparent backups of multiple versions of files and applications—including Exchange and SQL databases. The CDP 6080 offers Northern Gateway flexible disaster recovery options for Local Archiving, Offsite Data Backup, Site-to-Site Data Backup, and Bare Metal Recovery of entire systems onto original, virtual or new Windows® devices.

The result: centralized backup and disaster recovery of distributed data and applications

"I'm very confident in our CDP solution," said Heaven. "It lets us see what is backed up every day, and its disaster recovery capabilities give us the flexibility to implement the disaster recovery strategy that best suits our needs."

Northern Gateway now uses the CDP solution to centrally backup 9 TB of information from across its distributed sites, including its Microsoft applications, mission-critical student information system, Linux-based financial system, First Class collaboration system, and Polycom conferencing system comprised of database, Web and application servers. In addition, the CDP encryption functionality helps Northern Gateway meet government regulatory compliance.

"We're really happy with the low amount of time we've had to spend on this," said Heaven. "Tape rotation required staff to

do everything manually that CDP now does automatically."

"Maintaining tape backup systems can be expensive. We see annual drive replacement rates of over 50%," said Stewart, "but the biggest cost is having a technician dedicated to rotating the tapes, cleaning the heads, and all the other manual maintenance. That's where CDP can really make a cost difference."

The future: extended continuity of student data

Northern Gateway is in the process of building a new office, targeted for completion in 2011. Heaven sees an opportunity to deploy additional CDP capacity down to the lower grades.

"We're looking at extending our CDP deployment to centrally backup all of our student data," said Heaven.

This expanded capability could enable Northern Gateway to ensure continuity of student projects and assignments throughout their academic life, and even allow complete, permanent archiving of every student's data once they have rotated off the enrollment list.

"I'm looking forward to doing business with OSI and Dell SonicWALL in the future," said Heaven.

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*Malcolm Heaven
Network Administrator*

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