Pilot Thomas Logistics Reclaims 780 IT Hours Per Year by Moving File and Object, Backup and Cloud Archiving to Cohesity

Pilot Thomas
LOGISTICS

INDUSTRY
Energy

USE CASES
File Services, Backup and Recovery, Cloud Archival

COHESITY SOLUTIONS
SmartFiles, DataProtect, Helios, Spotlight, Insight

TECHNOLOGY PARTNERS
Pure, Google, VMware, Microsoft

CHANNEL PARTNER
SHI

Key Benefits

- Lower TCO and rapid ROI—three to nine months
- 780 hours of productivity regained
- $72,000 a year in cost savings and a significantly lower cloud archiving investment
- Entire environment backs up in hours versus days for just one VM

When oil and gas markets fluctuate, industry leaders adapt. Pilot Thomas Logistics continues to meet customers' industrial energy needs by doing more with less, including automating and streamlining IT. As a cost center, Pilot IT recognizes the need to add value and reduce spend, both of which it has been able to do with the web-scale Cohesity data management platform. Since deploying Cohesity for file shares, backup and cloud archiving, Pilot staff has regained nearly 800 hours of lost productivity and saved over $70,000 while achieving rapid ROI.

Challenges

Pilot's aging network attached storage (NAS) product was quickly and dramatically failing. It was full—housing 230+ shares—and initially Pilot had a dedicated IT specialist to manage the solution. Yet as IT reorganized into more general positions, system complexity and constant alerts were overwhelming staff, creating a liability for the energy company.

When Pilot IT began searching for a new NAS solution, top requirements included lower cost, meeting SQL performance thresholds (when used as a storage target), the ability to archive to cloud for scalability, and little to no downtime during the migration of its production systems including SAP that also uses the file shares as a storage target. Ease of use with a low learning curve were also important considerations.

Solution

After an introduction by SHI, Pilot replaced its existing NAS product with Cohesity SmartFiles. Migration of all production file systems to Cohesity for nearly 50 terabytes of data was seamless, including about 100 SQL Servers writing to Cohesity as target storage. The process was completed in one evening with no user and very little overall system impact.

"Because of the way the old system had been architected and given that our goal was no downtime, we needed to automate the entire migration process which Cohesity helped us to do. We had maybe five minutes of downtime," says Hankins.

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"We had a timeline of three years to modernize file services, backup and cloud archiving, and we completed them all within a year with Cohesity. Our total cost of ownership is less than zero for Cohesity—in employee time as well as space and tape archiving cuts. I've been nothing but happy with Cohesity."

Michael Hankins, IT Infrastructure Manager, Pilot Thomas Logistics

By securely exposing hourly, high-performance Cohesity backup snapshots via SMB for native Windows file explorer access, Pilot has enabled employees to perform self-service file recovery instantly—without IT assistance. This recently allowed a team member to access a project file share to recover a single deleted folder in minutes. This was impossible with the older product because backups often did not complete before the next one was scheduled to start.

Although Pilot had only planned to upgrade NAS, the success and cost efficiency of Cohesity's single, software-defined platform empowered the company to also improve its backups and archiving. Tape backups with the legacy product took a month, and if they failed, caused the company to revert to the prior month with no way to recover lost data, if needed. Moreover, the backup engineer located in Texas had to drive to Pilot's data center in Oklahoma once a month to manage the tapes. "It was a huge liability and risk," according to Hankins. "We could be spending up to 20 hours a week just managing our backups."

Pilot added cloud archiving for backups less than a year after adopting Cohesity for modern file and object services. Now Pilot stores primary application data in Pure and periodically archives from Cohesity to Google Cloud Platform, enabling IT to eliminate offsite tape storage while enjoying scalable, cheaper and more efficient management. The team expects to enable disaster recovery in the cloud through Cohesity, too.

Pilot is also taking advantage of the unique ability to run apps on the Cohesity platform. It has installed two Cohesity Marketplace apps—Spotlight and Insight—both of which mitigate risk. With Spotlight, for example, Pilot was able to quickly generate a report of all of the files an employee that had recently given notice had deleted prior to departure.

"Monitoring access to sensitive files on specific shares and quickly running reports is easy with Cohesity and Spotlight," says Hankins. "I wouldn't have had any tools to do that without Spotlight. It's definitely very useful."

Results

Pilot has experienced rapid ROI since consolidating its data management with Cohesity—the initial platform paying for itself in roughly six to nine months and cloud archiving in just three months. In contrast, most data center solutions typically have an ROI of 12 to 24 months.

With Cohesity SmartFiles, one IT team has reclaimed up to 10 hours per week—no longer troubleshooting, supporting tickets and traveling to the data center to replace failed NAS drives. A second IT team reclaimed the nearly five hours a week it spent creating shares, managing snapshots and manually maintaining the legacy product. With Cohesity, Pilot has recouped nearly 780 hours of productivity a year across these teams.

When it comes to backup and recovery there are clear benefits as well. Before Cohesity, backing up one Exchange Server VM would take two to three days. "Cohesity cut that time to an hour or two for our entire environment," says Hankins. "Peace of mind is also a big benefit of Cohesity. It just works, and if something does happen, I typically get an email notifying me that a support case was opened and closed before I knew about the problem. The support is excellent."

Cohesity also reduced Pilot's on-premises data center footprint as well as energy costs by roughly $2,000 per rack per month for three racks of the old NAS solution, for a total of $6,000 per month savings. Moreover, archiving to Google Cloud Platform through Cohesity is considerably more affordable than tape alternatives.

COHESITY

Pilot is achieving the following benefits from Cohesity's converged data management platform:

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- 780 hours of productivity regained

- $72,000 a year in cost savings and a significantly lower cloud archiving investment

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About Pilot Thomas Logistics

Pilot Thomas Logistics is the premier provider of fuel, lubricants and chemicals to the Energy, Marine, Mining and Industrial markets and is headquartered in Fort Worth, Texas. PTL operates in over thirty (30) states from 100+ terminals.

COHESITY