

Redstor Case Study

Stockport LA Implements RBUSS to Safeguard School Data

“For the schools it’s what they have been waiting for – no more tapes, no more manual tasks and most importantly no more unrecoverable data. The whole service has a ‘feel good’ factor about it.”

Case Study

The Stockport Schools ICT Technical Support Service determined the requirement to refresh ageing technology used for its data backup. Following an initial review of the cost effectiveness in its Nursery Schools, the authority team wanted to replace the use of ageing zip drives and began investigating ways to improve the manual backup processes and procedures. It was also recognised that the capacity of the zip drive only allowed for administration data to be backed up, thus leaving all other data exposed. Stockport needed to investigate better ways to backup and to improve all service delivery aspects to schools.

Stockport Council is a major organisation and the biggest employer in the borough delivering a range of key services including education services for 110 Primary, Special and Secondary Schools as well as pre-school Nurseries.

Challenge: Remove tapes, tape hardware and backup issues from schools with an easy to use system.

Damian Hodkinson at Stockport Schools ICT Technical Support Service commented “The majority of Stockport Schools including Nursery, Primary and Secondary buy into the technical services provided by the LA and rely on us for vision, planning and technical support.

The nursery schools required a backup technology refresh as the zip drives originally supplied were old, increasingly less reliable and had a capacity of only 250MB. When we began looking into the backup methods used we found that the procedures used in schools were erratic. Some were backing up regularly following our advice and instructions to the letter, whilst others were backing up only when they remembered to. This left many schools exposed to potential data loss.”



At A Glance

The Issues:

- Schools using various backup methods
- Support headaches for different technologies
- Data recovery not guaranteed

The Redstor Solution:

- The Redstor Backup for Schools (RBUSS)

The Benefits:

- Reduced costs & complexities in schools
- Unrivalled protection for SIMS, MIS and FMS
- Advanced, completely automated backups

The authority service team supports over 110 Servers operating Windows 2003 Server Edition which are mainly deployed to primary schools all of which operate SIMS Administration Systems. Included with these servers were AIT drives and a default installation of NT Backup to be used by the schools along with detailed instructions on how to backup. The service also provided scripting on each server which stopped certain services in order to complete the backup intervention with the schools being ultimately responsible for their data backup process, however the solution still required a fair degree of manual intervention with the schools being ultimately responsible for their data backup integrity.

Hodkinson added "We had spoken to the nursery schools about using the AIT tape based system within a server, but the cost factor was too high when you consider that they would be looking at about £500 for the system and then at least £350 on tapes. It was a cost that they could not afford let alone justify. We needed to come up with a solution that could drastically improve the process and remove the capacity headache. We also considered that by using this approach the number of helpdesk calls about data backup would be significantly reduced."

Prior to the application of Redstor Backup for Schools service if a school wanted a recovery they would call the helpdesk at the authority. The process was proving to be time consuming and the authority was finding that calls about data recovery usually included problems where backups had not been completed, including worrying calls where the backup software had reported a success, only for the recovery to fail. This was further compounded by differing approaches by schools to the backup regime. The problems were mainly associated with many schools not cleaning tape drives or reusing tapes that should have been removed from the data tape pool due to excessive use. The authority began investigating if there were any solutions in the market that removed the manual labour requirement and the costs, whilst saving the schools essential time.

Stockport Authority assessed the Remote Backup Service for Schools (RBUSS) promoted by Redstor. As part of the due diligence policy the authority investigated alternative solutions from a number of vendors. Developed to ensure that it meets the demands for local authorities, RBUSS will intelligently back up school data whilst being flexible and expandable, handling ever increasing data quantities. With data consolidated to one central point the authority can manage & administer any number of schools from a single interface as well as easily adding more when required. Hodkinson continues "We put all the contenders through their paces and although we found some really good technology out there, we selected the RBUSS offering because of its technical robustness, the resources available and the high quality level of service support offered by the Redstor technical team. We particularly liked the idea of having a second mirror hosted by Redstor but without all the additional cost of setting it up ourselves."

To promote the service, members from the Stockport Technical Support Service Team attended local SIMS training events held for schools and spoke to school representatives about RBUSS. They received a positive response with the majority of schools requesting the service immediately. "We are now being regularly contacted by the remaining schools to discuss installation of the service. Initially we were installing the RBUSS system in 10 schools per week. The response we have had has been fantastic especially when you consider the catalyst for this was the requirement for nursery schools." added Hodkinson. "It makes a change to be able to talk to schools about a 3rd party service and not feel embarrassed about the price. The RBUSS service significantly improves on the previous backup and recovery systems we had and provides a significantly higher level of reliability."

About Redstor

Founded in 1998, Redstor is a profitable Managed Services and IT Solutions Company focused around storage, data management and protection. Over 50% of Redstor's income is repeatable based upon creating enduring relationships with its customers. Redstor has over 10 years of expertise in managing, supporting and monitoring customers' data either at their site, remotely or on Redstor's own online storage and backup platform.

Redstor's trusted consultative approach is based upon understanding prospects and customer's business and IT goals and vision, then establishing a base line, before working with the customer to build a plan of action and a solution. This approach was a major factor in Redstor winning the SNS Storage Integrator of the Year Award 2008.

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