Case Study

INDUSTRY
State and local government

LOCATION
Decatur, Georgia

SOLUTION
Flexible email, file archiving, and data protection

DATALINK SERVICES

- Analysis
- Design
- Implementation
- Support

BENEFITS

Archiving and discovery

- 40-percent reduction of online message store
- Faster email migration with no data loss
- One terabyte of PST files recovered and archived
- $76,800 annual savings through streamlined email discovery
- Projected six-figure storage savings through file archiving

Enhanced data protection

- Backup success rate improved from 60- to 95-percent
- 85-percent reduction in full backup time
- File recovery in minutes instead of five to six hours
- $12,000 annual savings in staff time for recoveries
- 50-percent reduction in backup administration hours
- Projected 33-percent reduction in disk space when retention is automated

Datalink streamlines DeKalb County's email migration, discovery, and data protection.

THE CUSTOMER: DEKALB COUNTY

Georgia's DeKalb County includes a portion of Atlanta. It's known as the state's most culturally diverse county – 64 languages are spoken within its boundaries. Home to more than 720,000 residents, DeKalb County includes offices for more than half of the Fortune 500 companies. The county government serving all these constituents has 7,000 employees spread among multiple locations, and county leadership has a history of using technology to advance the goods and services delivered to its citizens.

Over the years, email had grown in importance as a tool for helping county employees work together to meet goals. However, the infrastructure that supported email was no longer adequate. Neither was the infrastructure for backing up data. The need to solve both of these problems led the county to Datalink.

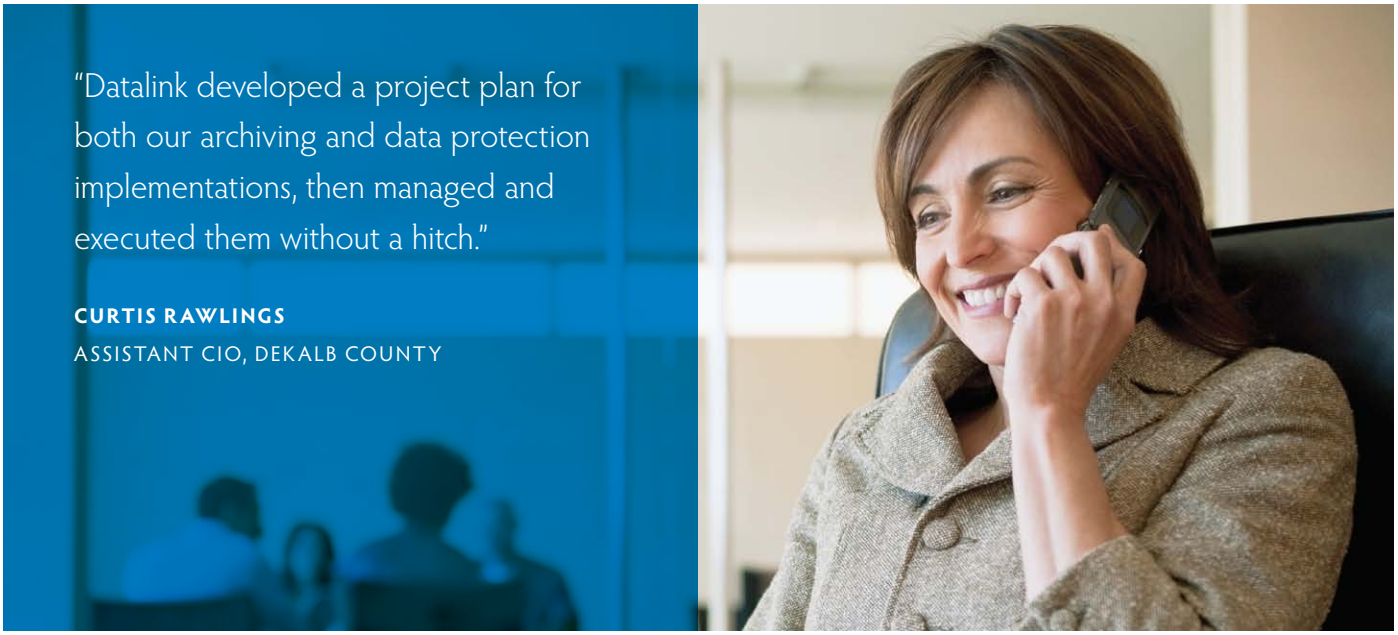
THE CHALLENGE: MAJOR TECHNOLOGY UPGRADE NEEDED

Underlying these problems was a challenge almost universal in government IT organizations. Simply put, because governments don't have to compete like private sector organizations do, their IT budgets are tighter. It's harder for a government IT team to keep an infrastructure upgraded or maintain enough IT talent on staff to manage an upgrade. If a system works, it's often run until its end-of-life.

That's why in 2006, DeKalb County's government was using a nearly 10-year-old email system (Microsoft® Exchange 5.5 running on Windows® NT 4.0-based servers). Microsoft® no longer supported either product and a major upgrade was critical.

Migrating the email accounts of the county's 5,000 users to Microsoft® Exchange Server 2003 would be a complex project. There were eight email servers, and each one housed 100 gigabytes of messages. Moving the data without loss would be difficult and time-consuming. And disruptions to email service during the project had to be minimized.

The IT team realized that an email archiving solution could simplify the migration. They could use the technology to pull older emails from the servers first, streamlining migration and minimizing the risk of lost or corrupted data. An archive would also speed up email search and retrieval, helping to solve a second



problem: The Georgia Open Records Act requires the IT team to search and produce records upon citizen request, which causes a large drain on a small staff.

A third critical need was enhancing overall data protection. The county's data had grown so fast, its data protection solution was no longer adequate. Backups routinely overran available windows and failed too frequently.

The IT team set out to find the right archiving and data protection solutions, as well as outside, experienced, and tenured engineers who would provide implementation help and long-term support .

THE SOLUTION: ARCHIVAL AND DATA PROTECTION

"We consulted the Gartner Magic Quadrant, talked with other county governments, and looked at several solutions," says Curtis Rawlings, assistant CIO for DeKalb County. "Coming out on top in our evaluation was Symantec™ Enterprise Vault™ for archiving and Veritas NetBackup™ for data protection. We could migrate data from an Enterprise Vault archive to even less-expensive storage using NetBackup, reducing storage costs while the data stayed indexed, searchable, and quickly retrievable."

Once it had chosen solutions, the IT team sought an information storage architect it could count on to make the implementation successful – one that could leverage experience from helping Fortune 500 companies improve the effectiveness of their IT, while addressing DeKalb County's specific needs. "Datalink has top experience in both solutions," says Vincent Fletcher, security manager for DeKalb County. "They're vendor neutral, so they could help confirm our choices. They're also the largest provider of Veritas support in the U.S. outside of Symantec. They have many successful Enterprise Vault and NetBackup installations under their belt."

Enterprise Vault was deployed first, followed by NetBackup. "Datalink developed a project plan for both our archiving and data protection implementations, then managed and executed them without a hitch," Rawlings says. "This was critical to us. We needed an archiving solution quickly and Datalink delivered, along with a good knowledge transfer to our team on how to use it."

THE BENEFITS

Fast migration, fast payback

Once the solution was deployed, the IT team put it to work archiving email. As the system archives, it indexes the full text of messages and attachments, making them easier to search, while compressing and de-duplicating emails. Archiving has reduced the county's email store by 40-percent, simplifying and speeding the migration that followed.

"Without an archival solution, our Exchange store files were too large, and we estimate we would have lost 60- to 70-percent of our data while trying to move them," Fletcher says. "With Enterprise Vault, no data was corrupted or lost. The solution paid for itself in the migration alone. Datalink helped set us up for a win."

The team is also able to retrieve, archive, and index the contents of almost one terabyte of PST files from around the network. "We don't allow PST files anymore," Rawlings says. "A major headache is gone."

$76,800 of annual savings in discovery costs

DeKalb County receives about four Georgia Open Records Act requests each month. Complying with each request used to take about 33 hours of staff time to search through email databases, tapes, and PST files. Three staff members were involved. Now, one staff member can typically fulfill a request in one hour – making about $76,800 in IT staff time available each year for more mission-critical tasks.[1]

Projected six-figure savings for file archiving

In addition to email, the technology can be used to archive files, SharePoint data, and instant messages, and the county plans to use it to archive file data. Rawlings estimates this will enable them to move as much as a terabyte of old records from the primary SAN disk onto other disk-based storage that costs 20-percent less per gigabyte. The result is a projected six-figure's worth of SAN disk space that could be reclaimed.

With about four recovery requests per month, that means the staff has an extra 20 hours per month or $12,000[2] annually in staff time to devote to higher value tasks. Backup administration time has also been reduced by 50-percent.

Streamlined, enhanced data protection

The county needs to back up approximately 26 terabytes of data. With its old data protection solution, the backup job success rate was about 60-percent. "NetBackup is easier to use and more effective than the solution we had before," Rawlings says. "The Datalink team set it up for us quickly and showed us what we needed to know." Since the solution has been deployed, DeKalb's backup success rate has gone from 60- to 95-percent, while the time for full backups has decreased from 60 hours to 9 hours – an 85-percent reduction. Incremental backups take 43-percent less time, as completion now takes four hours instead of seven.

Files are recovered in mere minutes from disk, whereas it used to take five to six hours to recover them from tape. With about four recovery requests per month, that means the staff has an extra 20 hours per month or $12,000[2] annually in staff time to devote to higher value tasks. Backup administration time has also been reduced by 50-percent.

The county plans to use Enterprise Vault and NetBackup to enforce a clear, limited retention policy and automatically delete information that has aged past the retention period. "That will minimize discovery cost and risk, and we'll be able to reclaim a projected 33-percent of our archive disk space," Rawlings says.

THE OVERALL EXPERIENCE: A SOUND STRATEGY THAT DELIVERED RAPID RESULTS

Datalink directly provides technical support on these Symantec products for DeKalb County. "I can see why Datalink is one of the top support vendors in the U.S. for Enterprise Vault and NetBackup," says Fletcher. "They've been responsive and helpful. I absolutely recommend them."

The IT team is now confident that email is archived appropriately and data is protected. "We don't have the luxury of being able to hire a lot of people," Rawlings says. "We need best-of-breed technology and outside expertise to get the job done. We get this from Datalink, Enterprise Vault, and NetBackup. The result is that we deliver better services to our staff and citizens." ■

1 $76,800 = four search requests per month x 12 months per year x 32 hours saved per search x $50 per hour salary plus benefits

2 $12,000 = four recoveries per month x 12 months per year x five hours saved per recovery x $50 per hour salary plus benefits

Making IT happen

A complete data center solutions and services provider, Datalink helps Fortune 500 and mid-tier enterprises get the most from every IT investment – with storage, server, and network expertise across the infrastructure. We deliver greater business results throughout, designing what we sell, deploying what we design, and supporting what we deliver.

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