VERITAS™

Large Pan-African Broadcaster Fortifies Data Protection

Veritas joins forces with Datacentrix to protect The MultiChoice Group's business-critical systems against ransomware

Challenge

The MultiChoice Group requires uninterrupted availability for several key business systems, but the company's legacy data protection solution posed some challenges. Backups failed, and even when they succeeded, the process was cumbersome. This created concerns about how well the company could weather a ransomware attack.

Solution

With the help of IT service provider Datacentrix, MultiChoice conducted a thorough needs assessment and due diligence process to select a new data protection vendor. MultiChoice decided on a consolidated approach for backing up data across its hybrid environment and selected Veritas. Datacentrix designed and deployed an infrastructure in which Veritas NetBackup™ backs up on-premises data to a local NetBackup Flex Appliance and sends data to a Veritas Access Appliance for long-term storage. Meanwhile, cloud-based Veritas Alta™ Data Protection instances enable MultiChoice to protect cloud workloads through streamlined backups and snapshots. All backups—across on-premises appliances and in Microsoft Azure and Amazon Web Services (AWS) clouds—are managed through a single pane of glass. MultiChoice also uses Veritas NetBackup™ IT Analytics to monitor its data protection environment and identify anomalies—signs of a potential ransomware attack—as well as to optimize on-premises storage and cloud utilization.

MULTICHOICE
ENRICHING LIVES

INDUSTRY
Communication & Media

EMPLOYEES
Approx.7,000

HEADQUARTERS
Johannesburg, South Africa

WEBSITE
multichoice.com

PARTNER
Datacentrix Holdings Ltd.

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> *Veritas and Datacentrix worked hand-in-hand to build a world-class backup platform for our workloads, both on-prem and in the cloud."*
>
> **Pfarelo Masithulela,** Senior Manager, Storage and Data Protection Platforms, The MultiChoice Group

Outcome

MultiChoice has realized the value and powerful performance of the Veritas portfolio for protecting the company's hybrid environment. Now, MultiChoice is able to protect twice as many systems as it could using its previous solution, and it is using less infrastructure. Day-to-day management of the data protection environment takes the MultiChoice team about a quarter as long as it used to, and the 100% success rate for data restores gives MultiChoice management confidence that they will be able to recover if they ever experience a ransomware attack.

75%

less time required for management

Using Veritas to protect MultiChoice systems reduced the amount of time staff spend managing data protection each day, from two hours to about 30 minutes.

System Uptime Is Business-Critical

When The MultiChoice Group was founded, it was the first satellite media broadcaster in South Africa. Since then, the company has expanded to serve more than 21 million subscribers across 50 African countries.

MultiChoice offers customers a range of content from local productions to the best sports offering in the world through SuperSport. The content is distributed via multiple channels include Direct to Home (DStv), Digital Terrestrial Television (GOtv), Streaming (DStv Stream) and Video on Demand (Showmax).

To do so, MultiChoice relies on several key back-office systems. One manages content and ensures that programs flow to customers without interruption. Another underlies corporate billing. Responsibility for maintaining the availability of these applications and data falls to MultiChoice's Storage and Data Protection Platforms group.

"If any of these systems was down for an extended period of time, or if we couldn't recover data, that would mean a loss of revenue for MultiChoice," says Pfarelo Masithulela, Senior Manager of Storage and Data Protection Platforms for The MultiChoice Group.

As the group expanded, MultiChoice required an enhanced approach to data protection. Masithulela and his team launched an open request for proposals (RFP) and engaged Johannesburg-based IT systems integrator and managed service provider Datacentrix to help with solution selection, architecture design, and implementation.

"We engaged Datacentrix, as we needed a knowledgeable service provider that understood how to overcome our specific pain points," Masithulela reports. "In evaluating experience, certifications, and skillsets across the various service providers, we were very impressed with Datacentrix."

Thorough Needs Assessment and Due Diligence

MultiChoice worked with Datacentrix for more than a year on the needs assessment and due diligence processes. "We outlined our pain points, then evaluated and selected a solution with the help of Datacentrix, although we took our decisions internally," Masithulela says.

The project team identified a few key requirements. Veritas solutions ticked all the right boxes. First and foremost, Masithulela says, "ransomware protection was the number one reason we selected Veritas NetBackup. Looking at the number of South African businesses that are running NetBackup at scale, and considering our organizational and data volume growth, we were confident that NetBackup could handle data protection for MultiChoice and support recovery from a ransomware attack using our backups, if necessary."

Ease of management was another decision factor. MultiChoice wanted to streamline data protection across both on-premises and cloud-based systems. Most of its databases will remain on-premises in the short term, but "we were increasing our cloud migration," Masithulela explains. "We have a number of cloud-ready applications that we're migrating to Microsoft Azure and Amazon Web Services (AWS).

"So, as we evaluated prospective backup solutions, we were looking for a system that would integrate cloud and on-prem backups in a single console, with central management across the enterprise," he adds. "This was another area where Veritas stood out."

Efficiency-Focused Data Protection Architecture

Datacentrix walked the MultiChoice team through several infrastructure design options. Together, the companies planned and deployed a Veritas data protection solution. Now, on-premises systems and databases back up to NetBackup Flex Appliances in the corporate data center. Based on container technology, the Appliances provide multitenant capabilities.

"I was impressed with the value proposition for the Flex Appliances," Masithulela says. "Having a converged platform enables media servers and primary servers to coexist on the same hardware. That has really reduced the number of servers and detached storage our data protection environment requires. Our legacy solution needed racks and racks of servers and block storage. The entire Veritas solution takes less than one rack."

Meanwhile, Datacentrix implemented Veritas Alta Data Protection virtual machines (VMs) in the cloud to manage MultiChoice backups in both AWS and Azure. For long-term retention and disaster recovery (DR), Datacentrix configured both the cloud-based VMs and the Flex Appliances to replicate backups to a Veritas Access Appliance in the data center, which then replicates to an Access Appliance in the company's DR site.

Datacentrix also deployed Veritas NetBackup IT Analytics so that MultiChoice could monitor backup performance and storage utilization. Daily notifications provide details on backup failures and successes. At the same time, a dashboard provides an overview of MultiChoice's entire data protection environment, identifying security gaps and offering recommendations that allow Datacentrix to move resources around to gain better efficiencies. "From a single pane of glass, I can see what our success rates are and where any problems are," Masithulela says.

The project timeline was tight, as license renewal for MultiChoice's legacy data protection software was fast approaching. Together, Veritas and Datacentrix implemented the replacement data protection infrastructure within a month. "Both Veritas and Datacentrix provided excellent service," Masithulela says. "We had joint project meetings on a weekly basis, sometimes even daily."

After deployment, Datacentrix trained MultiChoice database administrators (DBAs). "Datacentrix showed our team how to run backups and how to restore," Masithulela says. "The training ensured that everyone who would be involved in data protection was comfortable with the solution."
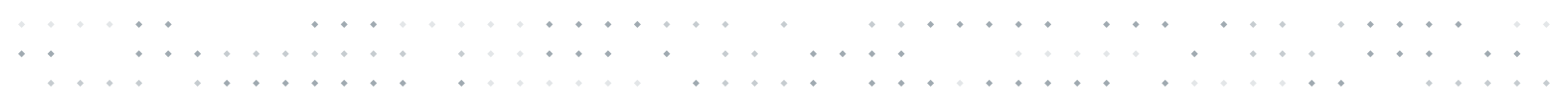
100% More Systems Protected, with Less Time and Cost

Datacentrix also tested the solution extensively, which helped make the MultiChoice management team more comfortable with the transition. As part of the testing process, Datacentrix restored all of MultiChoice's large databases. "The restores were successful, and everyone was happy, including our audit team," Masithulela says. "I know that we can restore any systems or data across our data protection landscape."

This meets his key requirement for the solution: "If we faced a ransomware attack, our Veritas NetBackup environment would protect our critical data. We're confident that we could recover from our backups if necessary."

Backups are completing much faster, due partly to the stability of the Veritas solution and partly to deduplication, which significantly reduces the volume of backup data MultiChoice writes and replicates. As a result, the company was able to increase the number of systems it backs up from fewer than 800 to 1,600, and the volume of data from 420 TB to 700 TB, without enlarging the backup window.

"The solution is working so well that we've seen 100% growth in the size of our backups without increasing the size of the backup window," Masithulela says. "Unlike our legacy solution, NetBackup has scaled easily. We haven't had any problems with the appliances, and the only thing that increased was our storage capacity. All our backups are completing within the backup window."

Costs are lower and more transparent because MultiChoice is working with a single vendor for both software and hardware. Management of the data protection environment is streamlined, as well. "With our legacy solution, we managed backup and retention policies on the storage layer, which was difficult," Masithulela says. "By contrast, managing policies is straightforward with NetBackup." He adds that between NetBackup and NetBackup IT Analytics, the Veritas solution has reduced the amount of time he spends managing data protection each day from two hours to about 30 minutes.

MultiChoice achieved all these benefits thanks to the expertise of the Datacentrix team. "We leveraged their skills and understanding of the Veritas products," Masithulela says. "Veritas and Datacentrix worked hand-in-hand to make sure that we ended up with a solution that we trust, which is stable and resilient. They built a world-class backup platform for our workloads, both on-prem and in the cloud."

For More Information

Please contact your local Veritas Sales Representative or Business Partner, or visit

Veritas NetBackup Appliance

Veritas Alta Data Protection

Veritas NetBackup IT Analytics

Veritas Flex Appliance

Veritas Access Appliance

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