

Success story: Kieback&Peter

A comfortable climate thanks to data backup: A technology supplier for building automation entrusts Backup Express from Syncsort with critical data backup

Organization Profile

- Leading supplier of instrument and system solutions in heating, ventilation, climate control, and building management

Company requirements

- Possibility of backing up several terabytes of data
- Support for a heterogeneous environment
- Novell support
- Support for Windows, OES, and NetWare clusters

Environment

- Windows, OES, and NetWare clusters with 10 nodes in the SAN
- Linux, NetWare, and Windows operating systems
- STK SL500 tape library with six LTO3 drives and 100 slots
- GroupWise, Oracle, and SQL databases

Benefits

- LAN-independent backups to alleviate network data traffic
- Cluster support
- High speed backups and restores
- Backup of 8 terabytes of data per week

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Erik Brunne
Systems Engineer
Kieback&Peter

Technology is moving into more and more areas of daily life. Even our buildings are controlled by innovative technologies. In particular, office buildings, shopping centers, and special events facilities are all being built incorporating extensive technology. Heating, ventilation, climate control, and building management systems are considered as early as the planning phase of new construction, or as late as the modernization of existing structures. However, only a few suppliers are able to offer all of the necessary products and services under one roof, from in-depth consultation to operation. One manufacturer of high quality measurement and regulation technology, as well as integrated building instrumentation and control technology, has been in business for decades: the Berlin-based company of Kieback&Peter GmbH & Co KG.

This traditional company, which recently celebrated its 75th year of operation, employs approximately 800 employees in Germany and leads Europe with innovative ideas, intelligently implementing them in the field of building automation. Throughout the country, solutions from Kieback&Peter ensure that climate control functions are managed properly, for example, in the Berlin parliamentary buildings and in the Friedrichstraße train station, at Nürburgring or in the Einkaufsparadies CentrO in Oberhausen. Secure data, which is available around the clock, plays an important role in this. The volume of internal IT data at Kieback&Peter has already grown to 8 terabytes and in all probability will increase by approximately 30% every year. Since the beginning of 2005, the company has relied upon “Backup Express” from Syncsort to protect this enormous volume of data.

Heterogeneous data backup with different clusters

Over the course of time, a heterogeneous and dynamically-growing IT landscape with high demands for performance and security has crystallized at Kieback&Peter. An IBM AS/400 is included among the clusters operating under Windows, Linux and Novell Netware. Currently, 32 decentralized sites are linked to the computing center in Berlin over two 2-MBit lines. A total of 800 employees, of which only 250 are located at the Berlin site, can access the central databases and file storage areas through a VPN connection. In this type of demanding environment, data backups and restores must be guaranteed 100%. Nevertheless, prior to the switch to Syncsort, data protection was always the IT department’s biggest headache despite all of its efforts. “For us the problem mainly had to do with the fact that we were not able to perform clean backups of the clusters and the Novell systems, particularly in the SAN, when using other products,” recalls Erik Brunne, Systems Engineer at Kieback&Peter. “At the recommendation of one of our system partners, we finally decided to evaluate the Syncsort product. From the first test, it quickly became a standard. With Backup Express we were quickly able to put our problems to rest. To our surprise, even the first test installation functioned correctly.”

Backup Express offers Kieback&Peter a wide range of innovations and advantages. According to Brunne, what is of particular interest is the uniform, browser-based, centralized administration of all processes and control of all tasks across different system platforms. Today, only a single person is responsible for the backup. This individual can follow, control, or intervene in the sequence as necessary from any location thanks to the intuitive drag-and-drop graphic interface.

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Administrators responsible for a particular operating system carry out any necessary restores within their system's environment on their own. Data that has inadvertently been deleted by users in the user directories can also now be recovered by the operator with just a few minutes of help from first level support. Previously, resolving a similar problem would have required several hours of a backup specialist's time.

Backing up in the 12 terabyte SAN

The variety of the systems in use at Kieback&Peter is based on the respective applications. The databases run on two Linux clusters; Windows applications run on the Windows cluster; and the entire palette of network, file, and printer services runs on the Novell OES cluster. Important to Kieback&Peter is a SAN (Storage Area Network) to which the entire server is linked. An HP EVA 5000 (Enterprise Virtual Array) with a total capacity of approximately 12 terabytes is used as a storage unit and is mirrored in the background on an HP EVA 3000 system located at a remote site. Data backup takes place on a Storagetek SL500-type tape library. This library is connected to the SAN directly over a Fibre Channel and has six LTO3 tape drives and 100 slots at its disposal. This configuration has a current backup capacity of 40 terabytes that can be expanded without a problem.

Safe with Backup Express

A total of 21 servers with different operating systems are backed up to the tape library on the SAN using Syncsort Backup Express. True cluster support, protecting the 10-node cluster in the SAN, is important in this situation. In Windows, Netware, and Linux, a device server is needed for each cluster node for Backup Express so that all six LTO3 tape drives operating in parallel can be controlled via the SAN at the same time. Data transmission rates of up to 70 MB/s per drive are achieved, without having to burden the LAN in the process.

A complete backup of the company data, which currently totals approximately 8 terabytes, is done each weekend. Additionally, a daily differential backup is performed in which only those files that have been altered are backed up. A complete backup previously took a day and a half, but now parallel use of the tape drives reduces this time drastically. This time savings has resulted in an expansion of the window of time that can be used for critical database evaluation and updates, which can now be completed during the weekend.

To date, Kieback&Peter has not experienced an extensive loss of data, yet they are prepared for all contingencies. Disaster recovery scenarios are run through completely at regular intervals. "In the event of the complete loss of a database server," says Brunne, "we can restore the database within half an hour. Earlier, we would have problems time and time again that would cost us many a night. Thanks to Backup Express, we can now deal with these situations easily."

Through its products and services, Kieback&Peter ensures optimal climate control in complex buildings, and Backup Express reliably protects data at Kieback&Peter. The climate in this critical area of IT has improved considerably since the switch to Backup Express. Erik Brunne is convinced that Backup Express was the right choice: "The solution is stable and shows outstanding performance with backups as well as with restores – this distinguishes it from other products that we have used in the past. What was also convincing was the easy operation through the intuitive interface. The Syncsort support group, which is good and above all can be reached, also deserves praise."