Wasabi Earns High Marks at Gloucestershire College

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>
> *-Kevin Agnew, the Head of IT at Gloucestershire College*

Overview

The UK's Gloucestershire College offers professional and technical training for an extensive number of in-demand careers, such as cybersecurity, police officers' certification, and digital arts. The college's three campuses, in the Forest of Dean, Gloucester, and Cheltenham, have about 6,000 enrolled students and 800 full-time staff.

Supporting many academic curricula across multiple industries can stress an IT infrastructure. For instance, says Kevin Agnew, the Head of IT at Gloucestershire College, the college's digital media classes generate a lot of video and photography data. That data volume requires reliable, secure cloud storage, ideally with support for multiple backup copies.

But that cloud storage has to be affordable on an educational institution's limited budget.

"Cost was the main challenge," said Agnew. "Plenty of platforms provide cloud storage, immutable storage, but they're not cost-effective." He went on a search for an affordable option that worked with the college's existing infrastructure – which led him to Wasabi.

Managing high data volumes while maintaining cost

Gloucestershire College has a hybrid infrastructure, with about a 50/50 balance between on-premises and cloud infrastructure, depending predominantly on Microsoft 365 services. Like other IT organizations, Agnew expects the organization to adopt more cloud services. "But we will always need that on-premises footprint," he added.

The college long ago implemented standard backup strategies, such as maintaining three copies of the data at two separate sites and ensuring

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CUSTOMER

Gloucestershire College

INDUSTRY

Higher Education

USE CASES

- Backup & Recovery
- Cybersecurity & Ransomware Protection

CHALLENGES

- Ensure secure and efficient data backups for university
- Find a cloud storage solution that provides a robust backup system
- Deploy a solution that is cost-effective and free of hidden egress fees

SOLUTION

- Technology Alliance Partner: Veeam
- Channel Partner: PrimeSys
- Wasabi Hot Cloud Storage

RESULTS

- Achieving data security for on-premises backups
- Predictable cloud storage costs
- Simplified backup testing and restoring without costs for egress or API

immutable backups for added protection, but all its storage resources were local. The college backed up its data to on-site network storage devices, then ran copies to another network storage device at a different campus. Once a week, the IT department copied the data to physical tapes that were put into fireproof safes.

That strategy worked to a point. It was cumbersome, didn't scale well and, in the case of an actual emergency, there would be a delay before everything was up-and-running.

If the college experienced an actual need to recover information, said Agnew, having an immutable copy of the data in the cloud would make it easier to restore to multiple locations. He wouldn't need to consider the physical challenges, not the least of which is lugging around tapes or physical network storage devices.

So, from a business continuity and disaster recovery point of view, Agnew said, Wasabi ticked the boxes. "It gives us the ability to access data from anywhere, should we need it."

The lesson plan: scale and save with Wasabi

An important requirement for Gloucestershire College was compatibility with its existing tools and infrastructure, ideally with plug-in deployment.

For example, Wasabi is compliant with the Janet Network, the UK's National Educational and Research Network internet connection. Janet is a digital, data, and technology agency focused on tertiary education, research, and innovation, and it provides higher education organizations with a secure, centrally funded internet connection.

Wasabi also is fully integrated with Veeam, the college's established backup solution. Veeam backs up the on-premises infrastructure that goes to Wasabi every night via the integrated Janet connection.

While Microsoft's 365 infrastructure is resilient and replicated across the world, the college couldn't depend on that alone. "It doesn't stop someone logging in with an account, deleting everything, and clicking on the Recycle bin," said Agnew. "We can't run the risk of someone going in and deleting data."

Plus, Microsoft itself recommends using a third party for Office 365 backup. Currently, the college uses Barracuda's cloud for 365 backups, with Wasabi protecting the on-prem resources.

Switching to Wasabi also saves time. The Veeam jobs run automatically, ensuring the college's data gets into Wasabi. Email and other alerts let Agnew know if anything fails. In contrast, the old tape-centric process required hands-on involvement, from verifying that the job ran to changing tapes to putting those tapes into the fireproof safes.

One reason that Wasabi stood out from its competitors was its predictable pricing without additional cost for egress or API requests. "We can access and retrieve our data as often as we'd like, and I don't have to worry about any additional costs," said Agnew. That suited the college's budget. "Wasabi makes it easy to plan for cloud storage costs.'" The cost is the same whether Agnew runs tests or retrieves data.

Getting started was easy, in part because it required so little hands-on attention from the Gloucestershire College staff. Wasabi offered a free trial, set up by solutions provider PrimeSys. PrimeSys also arranged for a meeting with Wasabi and Veeam's technical contacts to establish the best ways for the software to interoperate at Gloucestershire College. "I didn't

even have to touch it," said Agnew. When the trial proved successful, deploying the system was as seamless as any IT manager could hope for.

Result: A learning experience

"Before Wasabi, we didn't really have any cloud storage other than Microsoft products such as 365, SharePoint, Teams, and email," said Agnew. "Our experience with Wasabi has given us ideas for other ways we can use it."

The educational process for Gloucestershire College's IT organization is already underway. "The next time that some of our on-premises storage is due for a refresh," Agnew mused, "We won't just automatically refresh it. We'll look at: Hey, do we need to? Or do we already have something in Wasabi that works? I've got some ideas that I'm excited about."

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