


Community Bank Protects Customer Data with **Immutable Backups**



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--Dan Silva, CISO, **Union Savings Bank**



Union Savings Bank

Union Savings Bank has been serving the Danbury, Connecticut area since 1866. From the beginning, their mission has been to work for the benefit of the community rather than for the benefit of shareholders. As a true community partner, they've committed \$8.6 million and more than 100,000 volunteer hours to community organizations. Their services include personal and business banking, lending, wealth management, and retirement planning.

Services:

- 1 Fully Managed Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS)
- 2 Off-site 4-3-2 Data Protection
- 3 Recovery Time Objective (RTO) SLA's
- 4 End-User Recovery Testing
- 5 Ransomware Protection with Network Isolated and Immutable Backups



Situation

Before he became a Continuity Centers customer, **Dan Silva, Chief Information Security Officer for Union Savings Bank**, felt like he was fighting a losing battle to manage adequate backups with an LTO tape system. “Sure enough, any time we tried to do a recovery from tape there were always issues, and we would be unable to restore on the first attempt,” he said.

At that time, their disaster recovery practices consisted of once-a-year testing. The tests met baseline requirements, but they weren’t as rigorous as Silva thought they should be. Sometimes they would go well, and sometimes they wouldn’t. The team would document the results, but that’s where the process ended until the next year.

They needed a more robust set of recovery exercises, a plan for continuous improvement, and a backup strategy that gave Silva confidence they could restore their environment should they ever need to. “At the end of the day, our biggest concern is maintaining the security of the data people entrust us with,” he acknowledged. At the time, ransomware wasn’t a major threat, but the staggering rise in recent years makes his concerns all the more pressing today—reports predict there will be a ransomware attack every 11 seconds in 2021.

What is 4-3-2 Data Protection?

Solution

Union Savings Bank became a Continuity Centers customer in 2011, leveraging DRaaS, off-site 3-2-1 data protection, which has since been increased to 4-3-2, fully managed recoveries, Office 365 protection, ransomware protection with immutable backups, and extensive testing services. "As soon as we moved over to Continuity Centers, our testing methodologies evolved from just checking off a requirement to a useful and meaningful set of exercises, emphasis on plurality," Silva explained.

Continuity Centers takes the 3-2-1 approach (three copies of data on two different media with one offsite) a step further, to 4-3-2, ensuring there are always four copies of the data, on three different sets of media, with two of them off-site—one at Continuity Centers and one at a Backblaze data center, which are geographically distant, isolated at the layer 3 network level, and both immutable. "If your backups aren't immutable in the age of ransomware, they aren't really backups," Greg Tellone, CEO of Continuity Centers, explained.

With ransomware attacks at an all time high and increasing every day, ensuring backups are not just geographically diverse, but also stored on completely separate, isolated networks and protected by immutability, means attackers are less likely to compromise backups if they launch an attack on a production network. Using the same methodology to protect both the production network and backups provides only a single layer of defense. Using a Veeam Certified Solution Provider like Continuity Centers offers several, additional unique layers of protection for backups. Tellone concluded, "Recoveries used to only be requested due to user error, data corruption, hardware failures, and the occasional natural disaster. Today, our most common recoveries are due to ransomware attacks."

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Through the partnership with Continuity Centers, Union Savings Bank made several improvements to their testing regime:

First, they increased the number of full system recovery tests they conduct from one a year to two a year. Every six months the Union Savings Bank team and Continuity Centers team convene to go through the entire, full-system recovery process. "The frequency keeps our team sharp on what our recovery processes are and ensures our recovery scripts are adequate," Silva said. Over the years, they've formed trusted relationships through shared experience that Silva appreciates, "We've built up a rapport with Continuity Centers. Their engineers can almost recite our system names by heart, which I find impressive and reassuring given they have a whole portfolio of customers."

Second, they added a third test of their email systems to their program, something not even considered possible with their tape backups or even most disk-based systems. Over a weekend, Continuity Centers Recovery Engineers switch over the Union Savings Bank email servers to Continuity Centers, running their production email on their off-site replicas servers, to ensure inbound/outbound mail flows seamlessly and all of their historical data is recovered. This switchover process is performed within minutes. All mail sent/received that weekend are seamlessly replicated to Union Savings Bank's production servers, so when the switchback to production is performed, they've never missed a beat, or an important email from a customer.

Finally, they started bringing in users to perform test scripts and validate restored data to confirm that the tests meet their recovery objectives. The results help them identify actionable continuous improvement tactics.

“Disaster Recovery is not just about a group of engineers standing up servers and checking off some boxes. It’s about providing end-users with the functionality they need to continue performing their jobs, so they can continue serving their customers. That’s what we do at Continuity Centers, Tellone said. “Challenges, continued successes, and trust are what our relationship is built on with each and every customer. Union Savings Bank has one of the most impressive recovery testing teams and processes we’ve seen, so it’s always a pleasure to face challenges and win successes with them,” Tellone concludes.

The regular testing and ramped-up protocols give Silva confidence in their ability to restore systems should they ever face a true disaster. “All along, Continuity has given us this boutique experience. We’re not just some client. We’ve known each other on a first-name basis not just over the last year, but for the last decade,” Silva remarked.

Like any bank, Union Savings Bank is subject to information security audits and examinations. Continuity Centers help them meet requirements for maintaining safe systems and sound backup practices. As a financial institution, they’re also required to maintain specific data retention schedules which Continuity Centers helps them manage.

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Results

With support from Continuity Centers, Silva can lean on an expanded team of disaster recovery experts, which frees up his team to focus on serving the needs of their users. "We're not a large group. If we have a disaster, realistically, we could be short-staffed and running around like maniacs. It's important to have a partner like Continuity Centers who we can task with standing up our environment while we take care of the homefront," he said.

At times when Union Savings Bank users couldn't find a file, the Continuity Centers team has come through with successful restores even when the user gave little information on what they lost. Silva explained, "We've opened up tickets where the user can't remember the file name or has no idea when they last saw it. Thankfully, Continuity Centers will work their magic and accomplish those restores for us."

Silva also appreciates that Continuity Centers stays on top of emerging trends in backup and recovery while balancing Union Savings Bank's unique needs or requirements. As a seasoned Union Savings Bank employee of almost 22 years, he's seen the ebb and flow of backup solutions over his tenure.

"They keep up with industry best practices and best-in-class systems. They're not afraid to revamp their infrastructure to stay relevant, and they're always willing to work with us to find an appropriate solution to address our changing needs," he noted, citing the recent implementation of Veeam-powered solutions as a prime example. Veeam is a leader in backup management software and ransomware protection, giving Continuity Centers the ability to provide their customers with even more security, including immutable backups.

Ultimately, though, the biggest benefit Silva feels he's gained from the relationship with Continuity Centers is the peace of mind that comes from a high level of care and attention. For example, at one point Union Savings Bank faced issues with their production email system and thought they needed to fail over to the backup system. The Continuity Centers team walked them through how to quickly get their production environment back online. "Continuity Centers is an extension of our team and more. I can't think of too many vendors who would go above and beyond and even slightly out of scope to make sure the next step of our strategy made the most sense for our business," he testified.

With Continuity Centers as a long-time partner in their backup and recovery efforts, Union Savings Bank rests easily in the knowledge that if they ever face a serious disaster, they're more than well equipped to handle it.

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About Us

Continuity Centers has a laser focus on protecting your business operations and your data, ensuring you are recoverable at the time of disaster, whether it be an accidental or natural disaster or ransomware attack. Our Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS), Workplace Recovery, and Business Continuity services focus 100% on keeping you in business.

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