



Foxwoods Resort Casino Secures Backups and Accelerates Recovery with Cohesity and Cisco



THE Wander OF IT ALL

INDUSTRY

Retail and Hospitality

USE CASE

Backup and Recovery

COHESITY SOLUTION

DataProtect

WORKLOADS

VMware VMs, Microsoft SQL, Exchange, Active Directory, Nutanix VDI, AIX and Windows Physical Servers

SOLUTION PARTNERS

Cisco UCS
VMware ESX Hypervisor

CHANNEL PARTNER

Presidio, Inc.

By moving from its virtual tape-based data protection solution to Cohesity software on Cisco UCS, Foxwoods Resort Casino was able to dramatically improve data security and business continuity. System management time was reduced by 91%, from three hours to under 15 minutes per day, and data retention periods were doubled or even quadrupled for the tribal center's critical data. Virtual machine (VM) recovery times dropped by 99%, from five hours to three minutes, and the cyber resiliency of the Cohesity-Cisco solution boosted confidence in countering ransomware attacks.

Challenges

Foxwoods Resort Casino had been relying on its previous data protection solution since 1998. Restoration time was acceptable for file-level recoveries on the physical servers, but the product was not well-suited for virtualized environments. "Recovering a 40 GB VM could take up to four or five hours or longer," noted Michael Grillo, Principal Engineer at Foxwoods Resort Casino. "Our previous data protection solution was also very difficult to manage, requiring a lot of day-to-day handholding to make sure everything ran smoothly. As we started upgrading and virtualizing more of our systems, it became very clear that we needed a more powerful solution to accommodate our increasing demands for data backup and recovery."



"Cohesity-Cisco is a 'set it and forget it' data protection solution. It frees up IT staff for strategic initiatives. Cohesity on Cisco UCS radically accelerates recovery and simplifies management, enabling round-the-clock operations for our resort, casino, and tribal operations."

– Michael Grillo, Principal Engineer, Foxwoods Resort Casino

Key Benefits

- Reduced backup management time by 12x
- Cut VM recovery time by 99%
- Expanded data retention periods by 2x to 4x
- Increased backup protection against ransomware attacks

In addition to managing the technology systems for the casino and resort properties, Foxwoods' IT team also maintains all applications and infrastructure for the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. "We support our tribal health services facilities, court systems, 911 system for the tribal police, and many other essential services that need to be running 24x7 for a sovereign nation," said Grillo. "If an outage occurs on any of those systems, our tribal members' health and safety are in jeopardy. In addition, if we ever have an outage on the gaming side of our operations, our slot machines would go offline, ratings for those users would be difficult to obtain, and credit card processing would come to a halt."

Solution

Foxwoods started preparing for a technology refresh two years ago. "We knew we couldn't keep pace with our fast growth rate on our existing data protection solution," said Grillo. "We needed a more modern solution that would enable us to protect more of our data and recover our essential systems much faster."

High IT costs were also an issue in the previous environment. "Our infrastructure costs were skyrocketing since we had to keep adding capacity to our data protection environment and shrink our data retention periods. We needed to find a way to move forward in a more cost-effective manner," said Grillo.

Foxwoods evaluated several vendors' backup and recovery solutions, including Cohesity, Veeam, and Rubrik. "We had a much higher comfort level with the Cohesity product than with any of the competitors' solutions," reported Grillo. "The Cohesity sales team was also very technical and much more responsive to our needs. They were able to accurately size our environment, with a 3-5 year growth projection built into our plan. It was clear that Cohesity was the right path for us going forward."

Grillo made the decision to deploy Cohesity on Cisco UCS. "In addition to the impressive performance of the Cisco servers, Cisco's maintenance expenses were quite low due to a bundled service contract. Using Cisco servers for our backup environment also gave us the opportunity to 'kick the tires' on the UCS platform for potentially replacing our third-party production servers in the future."

Results

The biggest benefit of moving to Cohesity was the faster recovery time for VMs, according to Grillo. "Recoveries could take up to four or five hours or longer with the previous data protection solution. With Cohesity software running on Cisco UCS, the VMs are back online running off the cluster within just two to three minutes."

Grillo is also spending less time maintaining Foxwoods' backup environment. "I've used a number of different backup and recovery solutions during my IT career, and Cohesity is the easiest one I've ever dealt with by far," said Grillo. "I used to spend three hours per day making sure the backups were working. With Cohesity and Cisco, it takes less than 15 minutes. Even the Cohesity patches and UCS firmware updates are simple and fast. I just download the updates, and we're good to go within minutes."

Foxwoods has been forced to manage its IT environment with a smaller number of trained staff during the Covid-19 pandemic. "Even with half of our team out on sick leave or quarantining from a possible Covid-19 exposure, I still have time to cover their roles and responsibilities due to the simplicity of the Cohesity platform. This never would have been possible with our previous data protection solution," said Grillo.

The Cohesity software also increased Foxwoods' defense against ransomware attacks. "Cohesity provides added protection in case we are ever attacked," noted Grillo. "The cluster itself is immutable and encrypted, so it's very secure. Since the data is not accessible to outsiders, it's not as prone to a ransomware attack. Other data protection solutions aren't as secure as Cohesity. For example, if you store data on snapshots or an unsecured storage array, hostile intruders could go in and delete all of your snapshots and backups. That's not a concern with the Cohesity platform since the system is very secure by design."

"We've been able to increase our data retention periods even more than we initially had planned," reported Grillo. "Due to the storage efficiency of the Cohesity and Cisco UCS solution, we've doubled—and for some workloads, quadrupled—our data retention periods, further increasing our data protection capabilities for our casino properties and tribal operations."

Cohesity has enabled Foxwoods to improve the user experience for casino visitors. "A great customer experience is essential in the gaming enterprise," explained Grillo. "If customers are inconvenienced, they're not going to sit around and wait for somebody in the back room to fix the computers, they'll move on to another casino. The Cohesity and Cisco solution enables us to restore any compromised systems or data almost instantly, ensuring a stellar end-user experience for all of our resort and casino visitors."

“We currently store all of our primary data on site, and our backups go to another building on the reservation,” said Grillo. “We aren’t using any cloud storage solutions for offsite copies of our data yet, but we might consider putting a secondary copy of our backups into the cloud as a globally diverse option for DR. We aren’t ready to do this yet, but it’s great to know that Cohesity makes it very easy to move data between clouds and on-prem environments when and if we choose to do so.”

By running Cohesity software on Cisco UCS, Foxwoods Resort Casino was able to:

- Reduce backup management time by 12x
- Cut VM recovery time by 99%
- Shorten backup window to less than 6 hours
- Increase data retention periods by 2x to 4x
- Boost confidence in combating ransomware attacks to backups
- Improve the end-user experience for casino guests
- Ensure the health and safety of all tribal members

About Foxwoods Resort Casino

As one of the largest resort casinos in North America, Foxwoods Resort Casino offers guests a premier destination resort experience throughout its six world-class casinos; AAA Four-Diamond hotels featuring over 2,200 rooms; dining options for all tastes; luxurious spas; award-winning golf; state-of-the-art theaters; Tanger Outlet Mall; conference space for groups of all sizes; and free online casino games at FoxwoodsONLINE.com. Foxwoods opened in 1992 and is owned and operated by the Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation. For a detailed look at Foxwoods Resort Casino and Mashantucket Pequot Tribal Nation, visit Foxwoods.com.

Learn more at [Cohesity.com](https://www.cohesity.com)

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