Gleaner Life Insurance Society Reclaims 20% of IT Time by Improving File Services and Backups with Cohesity

Gleaner
Life Insurance Society

INDUSTRY
Financial Services

USE CASE
Backup & Recovery, File and Object

DATA SOURCES
DataProtect, SmartFiles, Helios

SOLUTION PARTNERS
Microsoft, VMware

CHANNEL PARTNER
Software Information Systems, LLC

Key Benefits

- 20% more free time due to more efficient file and backup management without tape
- 30-40% lower cost than other data management vendor solutions
- 8.7x data reduction
- 146x reduction in storage—from 3.6 petabytes consumed to 25.5 terabytes stored
- Non-intrusive upgrades and continuous new capabilities delivery, at no added cost

Modern data management is helping financial services organizations improve agility. For Gleaner Life Insurance Society, more efficient and cost-effective IT operations required replacing not only its existing backup product but also its legacy network-attached storage (NAS) solution. With Cohesity as its converged, software-defined data management platform for backup and file and object services, Gleaner lowered TCO and is well-positioned for future IT modernization success.

Challenges

A decade ago, Gleaner began to evolve its business to provide additional capabilities that today's customers expect from their financial services organizations. The insurer hired more IT professionals—from developers to IT infrastructure staff—and opened regional branch offices. As Gleaner looked to modernize IT, the insurer faced three key obstacles with its traditional systems.

Gleaner relied heavily on its hyperconverged infrastructure and downtime could cause significant business interruption. The company recognized diversification with complementary modern data management would enhance, extend, and further protect its business data.

> "Cohesity helped us eliminate our existing storage filer and it does everything we need it to do for backups—all for 30–40% less cost than other data management solutions. It's fun to work with a company actively delivering capabilities fast, like backup for Microsoft 365, that provide real value to customers at no additional cost."
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> **Josh Van Camp**, Network Administration Supervisor, Gleaner Life Insurance Company

Second, its manual backup tape rotation process—pulling, checking, and transporting tapes—wasted two to three hours of staff time every week. The 12-year-old NAS product the insurer had deployed for storing files was reaching capacity because it lacked deduplication and compression capabilities, and the vendor had recently announced the product's end of life at a time when Gleaner was experiencing growth in its unstructured data. Concurrently, inefficient legacy product network backups appeared to be saturating network links because IT had a number of open tickets to address complaints from its branch offices.

"Our older process worked, but it wasn't fast and we were running into limitations," explains Josh Van Camp, Gleaner's Network Administration Supervisor. "Because of the slow speed at which some of the data was backing up—between the file shares on the older NAS device and the virtual machine (VM) backups—we almost didn't have enough time to do it all over a weekend."

Solution

After discovering Cohesity while at VMworld, Gleaner IT staff evaluated Cohesity's modern data management solution against Rubrik and StorageCraft. It selected and deployed Cohesity because both its backup and file share capabilities were superior to the other vendors' products.

Today, Gleaner relies on Cohesity for two critical use cases: File and object services and backup of its VMware VMs from the production environment with replication to a co-location facility—eliminating the need for tape.

"The price was very attractive because Cohesity was 30–40% cheaper than the others but Cohesity file and object services was the deal sealer for us," Van Camp says. "The overall speed and reduction in data from dedupe with compression have saved us quite a bit."

Cohesity SmartFiles with advanced deduplication, compression, and small-file capacity optimization eliminates file redundancy across siloed folders and directories. At Gleaner, this means greater efficiency for files including marketing and customer policy communications created with productivity applications such as Microsoft 365 and Adobe Acrobat. Impressive, efficient data reduction lowers physical storage costs and data center footprints which in turn leads to reduced energy consumption and lower power and cooling costs. Storage throughput is faster, too.

Positive feedback from branch offices was a surprising benefit of deploying Cohesity data management. The legacy NAS solution with its older SMB protocol was chattier than Cohesity, negatively impacting performance. Van Camp says, "Users actually reached out and thanked us for moving file shares to a much faster platform."

Gleaner, which has been using Microsoft 365 for a number of years, is also taking advantage of Cohesity to back up all of its users' mailboxes. For IT, it is a simplified, additional layer of protection without another license fee. Next, the insurer is looking to back up its SQL databases and soon after, leverage Cohesity for recovery resilience.

"What's impressed us most since we adopted Cohesity has been the very bold approach the company has taken to adding features, like Microsoft 365," says Van Camp.

Results

For Gleaner, Cohesity is the best mix of price and features. It has the widest range of capabilities and is architected in the most efficient way for adding value without requiring add-on licenses. Upgrades are easy and non-intrusive to Gleaner's operations. Reports provide overall visibility into capacity use and data compression with alerting only in the instance of an issue, reducing inbox crowding and speeding time to resolution.
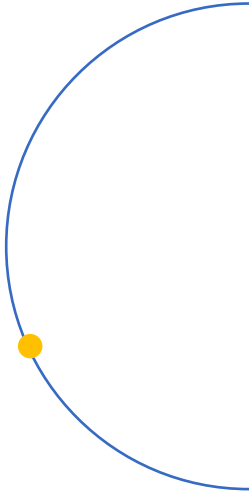
Cohesity's simplified approach to data management reduces IT operational headaches, allowing staff to spend 20% more free time on important tasks, and it works fast. The same tool Gleaner IT used before Cohesity to check file sizes used to take a whole day to run. "Now it takes 15–30 minutes to drill down through every folder, every file," says Van Camp.

Gleaner has achieved the following benefits with Cohesity:

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COHESITY

About Gleaner Life Insurance Society

Founded in 1894, Gleaner Life Insurance Society is a nationally recognized not-for-profit fraternal benefit society. Gleaner assists its members in achieving their financial security goals through a broad range of life insurance and annuity financial solutions. As a fraternal organization, Gleaner provides volunteer opportunities and support outreach programs, which make a difference in the lives of members and the communities where they live, work and serve.

Learn more at Cohesity.com

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5000075-002-EN 7-2021