



Fios Discovers BlueArc Titan Scalability Through Hundreds of Terabytes

“The data to be collected and reviewed mostly comprises files that are just a few kilobytes, but the quantity of files is enormous. I used to maintain smaller, five- or six-terabyte file storage systems to ensure reliable access, but BlueArc technology has the stability to support volumes that are significantly larger.”

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- Tho Han, IT Director, Fios

Summary

Recent changes in federal rules mandate a dramatically shorter timeframe in which companies must respond to a request for electronic evidence. E-discovery services provider Fios has seen monthly data processing on behalf of its customers surge upwards of ten to twenty times since new regulation went into effect, into the dozens of terabytes apiece. But a forward-thinking investment in BlueArc Titan storage, a relationship forged in 2001, means that Fios has been able to handle the massive volume in a compressed timeframe — effortlessly and just as reliably as before the new rules went into effect. Additionally, BlueArc tools for data migration and back-up help ensure seamless, cost-effective support.

The Customer

Portland, Ore.-based Fios has been a pioneer in the field of e-discovery services since 1999. Fios provides the nation’s top law firms and Fortune 100 corporations with litigation readiness and e-discovery response services that help companies implement policies for preparedness and respond to litigation and government investigations.

Fios strives to help legal professionals and their support teams to make the best use of huge volumes of electronic evidence, while maintaining a legally defensible audit trail. A BlueArc customer since 2001, the e-discovery company has upgraded its storage to keep pace with BlueArc technology enhancements, and expanded to meet customer demand.

The Challenge

Changes to Federal Rules of Procedure Rule 26 require businesses to find data more quickly than ever in response to federal court order. From e-mail to instant messages, voice mail, text documents and image files, any electronic information that a company stores must be easy to retrieve within 120 days of request.

With customers challenged to produce evidence from a potentially massive volume of data and under new, severe time constraints, Fios IT Director Tho Han had to consider the new rules’ impact on storage, including system expansion and administration.

The Solution

Han was confident that the company’s investment in BlueArc would support these latest developments, but he couldn’t anticipate the extent to which storage would grow. “We chose to invest in BlueArc technology for the peace of mind that our needs wouldn’t outpace its capacity,” says Han. “Today, we’re especially pleased with our decision.”

The need to process customers’ evidence has risen so dramatically that Han has added approximately 500 computational servers in just a few months. The Titan 2000 continues to respond to requests for data on these servers with unparalleled speed, providing performance that’s crucial to ensure timely, accurate processing.

Han also is using BlueArc tools for data migration and back-up. As a result, he has been able to make cost-effective use of different types of storage, and back-up time takes just a few hours instead of days.

The Results

Traditionally, litigation response has been managed by outside counsel. That's changing, with the update to federal rules. Given the much briefer period in which to respond to requests for electronic evidence, the risk and cost of non-compliance are even greater for large firms whose sheer size also means greater exposure to investigation or class-action lawsuits. To manage costs and risk, more corporations are making discovery the responsibility of general counsel.

In turn, general counsel relies on companies like Fios for litigation response and e-discovery response strategies to help ensure efficient, defensible response to litigation and investigation. Its Titan 2000 storage system infrastructure provides Fios with the fast access to millions of files that makes service seamless to end users. Once Fios collects customer data in its exact format including all metadata and processes and culls it, Fios customers access the data through a proprietary hosted service in order to classify the information for relevance to the lawsuit or investigation.

"The data to be collected and reviewed mostly comprises files that are just a few kilobytes, but the quantity of files is enormous," explains Han. "A file system might have several hundred million folders. I used to maintain smaller, five- or six-terabyte file storage systems to ensure reliable access, but BlueArc technology has the stability to support volumes that are significantly larger."

Titan 2000 now facilitates access to data on 700 servers, a huge increase from the 200-server system that was in place at the end of 2006. When the new federal rule for discovery went into effect, Han had planned to add 100 servers. As processing volume mounted and it became common for Fios consultants to ask to add 10 terabytes of customer data in any given week, Han quickly recognized he would need to increase storage capacity dramatically.

To make that expansion cost-effective, Han is using the BlueArc tiered storage solution to make the best use of SATA and Fibre Channel subsystems. Han had used SATA technology for nearline

storage. BlueArc Data Migrator and multi-tier storage allow him to move less-frequently used data from high-performance Fibre Channel to less-expensive SATA storage, automatically and without disruption to applications or end-users.

"With BlueArc tools, we can move data to SATA storage as appropriate, so that we're spending less and driving better return on our total storage investment, without any risk to performance," explains Han. "We've moved several terabytes already, and the savings add up."

The surge in data volume has intensified the importance of data back-up for Fios and its customers, as well. Prior to new federal regulations, Han says back-up was a two- or three-day process, so the prospect of backing up even more data made the task daunting. BlueArc Incremental Data Replication software supports change-list replication: Snapshots of data serve as a reference point and only changed files get replicated. Han says that despite the incredible volume of data, back-up is just a matter of hours.

The Conclusion

Discovery work now requires data to be processed within tighter court-issued deadlines, in order to comply with the law. For Fios, that abbreviated response timeframe means more customers' data must be processed simultaneously, as well.

"By the time data gets to us, it's already an urgent job," Han says. Nevertheless, with the seamless performance of its BlueArc Titan 2000 systems, Fios has been able to expand its business in less than a year to provide 24-hour service, seven days a week, at two data centers. The company's storage capacity has tripled in less than a year, and it continues to grow.

Some of the nation's largest corporations are just beginning to feel the effects of discovery that isn't handled properly, including fines and other consequences that work against a favorable outcome, and even negative publicity. Fortunately for Fios customers, e-discovery process is not a worry.



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