



BACKGROUND

The rapid growth of e-learning is evident today as companies from a wide range of industries have recognized its underlying benefits. Since its inception with the rise of the web, e-learning has evolved from simply IT and software training, to encompass courses for leadership, finance, HR, project management, and compliance. According to a recent survey by SkillSoft, e-learning comprised 33 percent of all corporate training in 2005, while 80 percent of training and HR managers expect e-learning to continue to increase through 2007. Quick turnaround, fluid courseware techniques, and cooperative curriculum development between customers and providers make e-learning more efficient than traditional classroom instruction. E-learning offers not only pronounced savings in training but added value of faster education in areas that require ongoing instruction, which translates into higher employee productivity.

With so much projected growth in the market, Knowledge Anywhere, a Bellevue, Washington-based e-learning solutions provider, has substantially expanded their customer base since its founding in 1998 with solutions that improve overall operations and drive sales. Knowledge Anywhere's web-based courses provide interactive, engaging content to trainees, and can be accessed on multiple devices including PCs, wireless devices and diagnostic medical equipment. Knowledge Anywhere's customers emanate from a wide range of industries and include Fortune 500 companies such as Microsoft, Wells Fargo and General Electric as well as emerging growth players such as Wire Dynamix, T-Mobile, Cricket Communications and Wireless Advocates. Custom e-learning solutions range from application and sales training to how distributors can make and sell wine.

Most client projects require the work and talent of 6 -10 production people and involve large data sets that include documents, audio, video and Flash animation. Each member of the team creates and needs ongoing access to a wide array of data to work on and complete each project. Many client projects are reoccurring and require ongoing modifications, resulting in large sets of version controlled data. The company will often times handle over 20 projects per month which range in size and scope. Some projects range from a 4-5 GB data set, while a current project with a Fortune 100 client requires backup of 130 GB of data each night. In addition, Knowledge Anywhere has to keep up with the speed of their clients and ensure they don't lose any project data. As a result, backing up data is critical to the success of their business.



CHALLENGE

As Knowledge Anywhere's business continued to grow, the company faced an increase in both requirements for each training project and the number of concurrent projects underway. With a team of 60 people, 80 percent of which work remotely trying to access data simultaneously, staff would find themselves waiting for large files to load. Due to limitations of the existing storage infrastructure, Knowledge Anywhere hit the threshold for storage capacity.



SOLUTION

Knowledge Anywhere turned to its IT services and support provider, isoutsource.com for counsel on the right solution. "We've been a Sony partner for four years and when our customers ask us to evaluate their storage requirements and advise them on the best solution, we always recommend Sony AIT," said Dan Hay, CEO of isoutsource.com. "If you take all the key elements into consideration, including form factor, performance, capacity and price points, there's no comparison with Sony AIT."

The most critical data on Knowledge Anywhere's 14 servers was backed up to DLT drives until 19 months ago when the drives had a number of reliability and performance issues. Now after isoutsource.com's deployment of Sony's AIT autoloader, data that spans multiple tapes is backed up much faster than before.

Furthermore, after deploying AIT-3 autoloader for two years, Knowledge anywhere recently upgraded their backup to include an AIT-5 LIB-81 1U autoloader which they feel will give them the boost in capacity and reliability they desire.

"We have between 300 and 400 active customers and 90 percent of them archive their data on AIT tape drives," said Mike Cook, managing consultant of isoutsource.com. "As Sony has advanced its product line from AIT-1 to the newly available AIT-5, we've continued to recommend to our customers that they upgrade to the latest and best from Sony."

The reliability of AIT-5 drives result, in part from innovative features such as an automatic head cleaning system, and a soft touch tape loading system mechanism. The drive cooling system is isolated from the tape mechanism, thereby limiting airborne contaminants from entering the tape path and affecting reliability. An AIT-5 drive's mean time between failures (MTBF) is an impressive 400,000 hours at 100 percent duty cycle. Customers can smoothly migrate to the higher capacity of AIT-5 storage solutions without losing access to, or compatibility with, data recorded on prior generations of media as AIT-5 drives are read and write backward compatible with AIT-4, AIT-3Ex, and AIT-3 media.

"The less time I have to spend worrying about our data archiving problems, the more time I have to spend servicing our existing customers and winning over new ones," said Warner Scheyer, director of development of Knowledge Anywhere. "Sony AIT drives are our ideal backup system and an integral component of our disaster recovery plan."



CONCLUSION

As a company that was recently named one of the 'Fastest Growing Technology Companies in North America' by Deloitte & Touche, Knowledge Anywhere recognizes the importance of having reliable, high-performance storage at the core of its business. Thanks to its superior performance and capacity, Sony AIT tape drives allow the company's creative talent to focus on the quality of their product, not the underlying infrastructure. This, in turn, has led to additional opportunities and clients.

The AIT format continues to evolve and coincide with the growing needs of both small to mid-sized business users, while scaling up to meet the ever-expanding needs of enterprise customers. The LIB autoloader family and AIT tape drive and media technology have demonstrated this capability over the years and continue to be extended and improved to meet evolving customer needs for high capacity, extreme density and easy to use archival solutions.