



Asigra Televaulting – A More Efficient Solution For Distributed Backup and Restore

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Management Summary

What if, instead of postmen delivering mail to homes each day, everyone in town had to drive to the post office to pick up their own mail? It would be a hassle, for sure. Much more of the community's time would be consumed with mail delivery – say, 5 people full time versus 3,000 people performing a twenty-minute daily chore. All of the individual trips would add to road traffic and gasoline consumption. As one more chore in everyone's busy lives, people would probably put it off and pick up mail less frequently. In short, it would be time consuming, bothersome, inefficient, and more costly in aggregate. Centralized mail delivery is certainly a good thing!

Now, think about this in light of data backup and restore. *Why do geographically-distributed enterprises typically perform backup and restore locally at each site?* There are difficulties with this decentralized approach:

- Redundant tape backup hardware, software, and media at each site,
- Ongoing management costs at each site, including skilled administrators and training,
- Inconsistent or haphazard backup processes across the organization, which can leave critical enterprise data exposed, and
- Slow restore times, especially if tapes are physically shipped off site to protect from local disasters.

This is the data protection equivalent of the town where everyone picks up their own mail at the post office. Infrastructure and operating costs are higher than necessary, and the risk of data loss and poor restorability is greater.

Asigra offers a centralized solution for backup and restore called *Televaulting*. It automatically sends data over a network from remote sites to a central backup location. This means automated, centralized management and no more hassles associated with local tape backup. The solution augments, not replaces, existing backup infrastructure and is agentless, so it does not consume client resources.

Like the more efficient squad of postmen, Televaulting is an elegant solution to the difficult problem of distributed backup and restore. Read on for details.

IN THIS ISSUE

| | |
|-----------------------------------|---|
| ➤ Asigra Has Been Around..... | 2 |
| ➤ The Televaulting Solution | 2 |
| ➤ Reconfiguring Economics | 3 |
| ➤ Conclusion | 3 |

Asigra Has Been Around

Though Asigra recently re-launched its *Televaulting* solution, neither the company nor the technology is new. In fact, both have been around for 18 years. Asigra has built its business one step at a time – some might call it the “old-fashioned” way. Its customer list includes names like Porsche, Legg Mason, and Fujitsu-Siemens ICL. Its financials are solid – zero debt, plenty of cash on hand, and millions in recurring revenue from software maintenance. This is no startup, burning through cash and rolling the dice on *the next thing*. **Asigra is an example of a conservatively-managed company with an established technology that sees an opportunity to step onto a larger stage.** It credits the trends of fast data growth and the increasing pains of distributed backup and restore for creating this market opening.

The Televaulting Solution

Asigra Televaulting is a comprehensive software solution for distributed backup and restore. The first part of its name *Tele*, as in telephone or telegraph, implies sending data over distance. *Vaulting*, as in electronic vaulting, implies data is received and stored in a central facility. Accordingly, Televaulting consolidates, manages, and stores backup data from remote sites. It works with and complements other backup systems, and so does not require an enterprise to remove existing infrastructure and invest anew.

Salient Features

Salient features of Televaulting include:

- **Broad platform support** – Televaulting can back up clients running *Windows*, *Novell*, *Linux*, *Unix*, *AS/400*, and *Mac OSx* operating systems. It performs hot backups¹ for *Oracle*, *MS-Exchange*, *MS-SQL*, *Lotus Notes*, *GroupWise*, *MySQL*, and (coming soon) *DB2*.
- **Network and storage optimized** – Televaulting backs up incremental

changes, eliminates common files, and performs compression to minimize wide-area network (WAN) traffic and the amount of data stored. This streamlines the backup process. Data is also encrypted² for secure transmission and storage.

- **Agentless architecture** – Televaulting clients do not need to run agents, which greatly simplifies installation and does not interfere with applications or consume their processing resources.
- **Simplified licensing** – Software license charges are based on the amount of data stored (after common file elimination and compression), not the number of clients, sites, or backup servers. This unique approach is simpler to administer and scale and could result in savings on software licenses.
- **Centralized management** – Televaulting centrally manages a geographically-distributed environment, which includes backup scheduling, service-level agreement (SLA) management, event/error notification, billing, and budgeting.

Technical Specifications

Televaulting consists of two main components. The first is *DS-Client*, which runs on a Windows or Linux server at each remote site. It gathers backup data from local servers and PCs, performs compression and encryption, and sends the data out over a WAN connection (anything running TCP/IP). Only two copies maximum of any given file are transmitted, even if they are on multiple servers with different file names. *DS-Client* resides inside the firewall and adopts the LAN's existing security settings. A copy of backup data can be kept locally for even faster restores. Management is provided by *DS-User*, a graphical user interface (GUI) that runs on the same server as *DS-Client* or a separate one for remote management.

The second major component is *DS-System*, which is on the receiving end of

¹ Virtually no application downtime.

² Using AES or DES algorithms.

backup data coming from one or multiple DS-Clients. It runs on a Windows, Linux, or Solaris server and typically resides in the main data center. DS-System stores data on disk and, when requested, sends out backup sets for restores. An optional Long Term Storage (LTS) option archives to tape based on data characteristics and user-defined policies. DS-System is also the interface point with the existing backup infrastructure, which can, in turn, back up DS-System's storage. It supports N+1 grid configurations and multiple file system mount points for high scalability. *DS-Operator* is the corresponding management GUI.

In addition, an optional agent called *DS-Client Lite* is available for laptop PCs or anything that is only periodically connected to a network. It encrypts files and sends them to the DS-System over a TCP/IP connection, even dial-up. CPU usage controls limit its consumption of system resources. It supports Windows 98, NT, XP, and 2000.

Reconfiguring Economics

In the end, technology decisions are economic decision. Purchasing criteria should be business impact and return on investment, not simply technology for its own sake. The most interesting benefit of Televaulting is how it reconfigures the economics of distributed backup:

- **Lower infrastructure costs** – Compare the cost of a DS-Client server running at each site to the cost of a backup server, agents, tape drives, and tape media.
- **Lower operating costs** – This is where the most significant savings are. Televaulting eliminates ongoing costs like local backup administrator(s), training, physical tape handling, and so forth. This is the benefit of automation and centralized management.
- **Capacity-based pricing** – Software license charges vary based on each enterprise's environment, so you will have to do your own comparison of Televaulting versus the alternatives. But you

may find that its unique capacity-based licensing scheme is advantageous. At very least, the scheme is simpler to administer and scale.

- **Faster recoverability and lower risk of data loss** – Televaulting provides disk-based restore, which is faster than transporting, loading, and positioning tapes, especially if they are kept offsite. Remote sites or help desks can initiate restores through a GUI. Keeping data offsite at a central facility also lowers the risk of data loss due to a local disaster. By improving data recoverability and security, the solution helps keep business processes functioning and productive.

Conclusion

If your enterprise has remote sites that perform local tape backups and restores, consider a more efficient alternative. **Asigra Televaulting, a notably complete and seasoned solution for distributed backup and restore, is certainly worthy of consideration.** It can complement and enhance the existing backup infrastructure at your main data center. Most importantly, Televaulting can reconfigure the economics of distributed backup and improve service levels. Check it out.



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