



LiteSpeed™ Helps Oxfam Reduce Backup Time by 50 Percent and Storage Costs by 90 Percent to Keep Its Relief Efforts on Track

Oxfam is one of the UK's most active charities, raising a gross income of over £253m (equivalent to approximately \$473m) in the 2004/2005 fiscal year. Like any charity, Oxfam is understandably conservative when it comes to expenditure and relies heavily on the use of IT to operate as efficiently and cost effectively as possible. It uses PeopleSoft to provide applications for logistics, finance and project management. With a large international presence, one of Oxfam's challenges is the delivery of these applications to remote locations, often with very limited bandwidth, and in troubled areas. To help overcome the challenges of backing up and restoring an ever-growing database, while ensuring a high level of availability to users worldwide, Oxfam turned to Quest Software.

The Challenge

The data for the PeopleSoft application is held in a series of SQL Server databases. Although the production database holds the live data, a number of additional copies of the database are typically required — and are used for development, quality assurance and training purposes. As the volume of live data increases over time, the size of additional copies expands at the same rate as they are refreshed. This not only increases the amount of storage required, but also the length of backup/restore times during nightly housekeeping activity.

Oxfam initially used native Windows file compression and PKZIP to reduce the size of the daily backups to disk, which are then copied to LTO tapes. "As a charity, we expect to take on some levels of administrative pain in the interests of lowering our operational costs, but as data expanded, we were spending increasing amounts of time finding space on the network for our backups," said Jason Oldroyd, technical support manager, Oxfam.

For Oxfam, the issue was less about the levels of storage and more about the time spent on the backup/restore process. "The cost of storage is getting cheaper, and, as a charity, we get good discounts from our vendors. What was more pressing was the increasing amount of time we were spending on managing our storage. For instance, our database refresh processes were taking around half a day. Although this did not affect our critical production environment, it did impact the training environment and therefore the end users," explained Oldroyd.

The increasing amount of time being spent on DBA activity meant that Oxfam was less able to react to other tasks. This had serious implications for Oxfam's disaster recovery procedure. Restoration of Oxfam's production environment would have been subject to the same kind of time constraints. "A delay to our production environment would have had an impact on the running of our warehouses. For instance, our logistics application is used to control the delivery of water storage tanks to provide clean water to disaster areas throughout the world; a delay could potentially have been life-threatening," noted Oldroyd.

Oxfam recognised that they had gone beyond their acceptable levels of pain, and as data archiving was not currently an option, they needed a solution to manage the growing backup and restore process for their SQL Server databases. The aim was to minimise the amount of time spent on managing the databases and provide a fast disaster recovery solution for Oxfam's critical PeopleSoft applications.

The Quest Solution

Oxfam surveyed the market in search of a suitable solution and had made the decision to evaluate LiteSpeed™ from Quest Software. At around this time, one of Oxfam's DBAs had submitted an article to a SQL Server Internet technical forum, which won Article of the Month. By chance, the prize was a copy of LiteSpeed.

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- Jason Oldroyd
Technical Support Manager
Oxfam



Overview

Headquarters

Oxford, UK

Services:

Charity

Critical Needs

Solution to reduce the SQL Server backup/restore window and provide disaster recovery of a critical production application

Solution

LiteSpeed for SQL Server

Results

- Delivered higher PeopleSoft availability, through time savings of 50 percent for the database backup/restore process
- Delivered an acceptable disaster recovery procedure for a critical application
- Achieved application improvements through time savings to DBA activity
- Achieved storage savings of 90 percent

LiteSpeed is a low impact, high-performance backup and recovery solution for Microsoft SQL Server. It provides integrated compression and encryption in the backup process, generating significant savings in storage costs and cutting hours off backup and restore times, dramatically reducing maintenance windows.

Oxfam evaluated the product and was impressed by the time savings and the levels of compression that it experienced. "We were getting 10:1 compression, and the process didn't require any additional space," commented Oldroyd. "More importantly, the backup and restore time savings were more than adequate for our needs."

On this basis, Oxfam purchased additional licences of LiteSpeed to manage the SQL Server databases for its entire PeopleSoft environment."

The Bottom Line

Oxfam's backup window was reduced to acceptable levels, increasing international availability, which is restricted during housekeeping. "LiteSpeed has reduced our daily housekeeping by 50 percent, from six to three hours, increasing international availability and keeping track with demand," explained Oldroyd.

Oxfam's disaster recovery procedure is in place for faster restoration of its critical production environment. "Using LiteSpeed, our production database now takes only 20 minutes to back up and 90 minutes to restore, which is twice as fast as when the database was half its current size. These times are far more acceptable and will ensure minimal disruption to our critical PeopleSoft applications, so Oxfam's emergency relief efforts do not suffer," explained Oldroyd.

Oxfam's DBAs now have more time to manage the environment, to improve it and work with the PeopleSoft application developers. "The DBAs have time to work on continually improving the applications, by optimising the environment and responding to user requests," added Oldroyd. "These application improvements contribute to the efficiency of the work carried out by our organisation."

By using LiteSpeed, Oxfam has realised storage savings of approximately 90 percent. "When we went live in 1999, our production database was only two gigabytes (GB). When you consider that this database is now 110 GB in size and that our total environment is around 10 times that size with the various copies, the savings on disk, tape, time and overall management are significant, thanks to LiteSpeed. It would now be very hard to function without it," noted Oldroyd.

About Oxfam

Oxfam is an independent organisation, registered as a charity. Its mission is to work with partners, volunteers, supporters and staff of many nationalities, as part of a global movement to build a just and safer world. As a catalyst for overcoming poverty, Oxfam works in three main ways: to save lives by responding swiftly to provide support and protection during emergencies; to develop and implement programmes and solutions that empower people to work their own way out of poverty; and to campaign for lasting change.

About Quest Software, Inc.

Quest Software, Inc. delivers innovative products that help organizations get more performance and productivity from their applications, databases and Windows infrastructure. Through a deep expertise in IT operations and a continued focus on what works best, Quest helps more than 18,000 customers worldwide meet higher expectations for enterprise IT. Quest Software can be found in offices around the globe and at www.quest.com.