

Buffalo Technology
Case Study: CMR
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Title: Space for Growth, and then Some

Sub-title: Buffalo TeraStations deliver multiple solutions to CMR



Data is business at Computer Market Research (CMR).

For more than 26 years, the San Diego-based company has provided tools and web-based applications designed to collect, cleanse, and analyze data that enable companies to efficiently manage sales channel marketing campaigns.

“One of the chief services we provide is that we’ll take the data, no matter how you got it, and clean it up,” said Mark Bryson, director of information technology.

The company accumulates millions of transactions for each of its clients, and then summarizes the data in reports that support their reseller channels. CMR has emerged as the world’s leading channel data management provider to Fortune 500 high-technology and other large and small companies around the globe. Twenty four hour access to data is necessary to accommodate its global client base.

CMR’s various offerings include 14 different modules offering channel services such as rebate tracking, deal registration, and commission calculation. “We have to keep everything running day and night,” said Dan Davidson, development manager at CMR. “Obviously, you want these tools to be available 24 hours a day. If people cannot register new deals, people cannot make their money.”

Buffalo Terastation NAS (Network attached storage) products, in addition to the use of fallback servers, are central solutions in their 24/7 strategy. In an environment where backup and recovery plays a critical role in ensuring 24-hour availability, CMR turned to TeraStation storage for daily backups and server images, and to provide long-term archival storage for its production environment.

The TeraStations serve the primary function of backing up the company’s databases—all the data it stores for its clients, as well as images of its 32 Windows-based servers. This enables quick recovery in the event of a server crash.

With 32 Windows-based servers to support, CMR was attracted to the TeraStation’s large storage capacity and its ability to integrate with Windows Domain and Active Directory Services.

“Nowadays,” said Davidson, “a single terabyte is not that much; it was nice to have something that would give us up to eight terabytes.” The TeraStation’s large capacity in a RAID 5 configuration provided complete redundancy while also allowing CMR to store complete server images.

That capacity came as “a life-saver at the time,” said Bryson. “We wanted to be able to push a lot of data to an appliance and manage it instead of having to buy extra hard drives for an existing appliance, take apart the array and rebuild it to accommodate our growth.”

The TeraStation’s rack-mount design also benefitted their bottom-line. “A lot of our servers are co-located and we’re charged for rack space,” explained Bryson. The TeraStation’s compact design, he added, provides a more economical configuration and “the biggest bang for the buck.”

Its support for multiple protocols, also delivered cost efficiencies that delivered directly to the company’s bottom-line. The TeraStation’s built-in FTP capabilities offered a license-free alternative to third-party fee-based solutions, such as the one that CMR was using.

CMR clients frequently need to transfer data from their reporting resellers to CMR to clean and return. Presently, clients send CMR data for cleansing via FTP, email or EDI. CMR posts the cleansed summary data to an FTP site for their retrieval. “A reliable solution is extremely important because these things are all automated processes,” said Bryson.

“The Buffalo solution is now taking on several roles,” said Bryson, “first as a storage array and now as an FTP service utility that allows us to be able to manage our files. That’s going to save us money—probably as much as the cost of the TeraStation.”

Longer term, the TeraStation’s ability to replicate the contents of one TeraStation to another presents another attractive feature. Its point-to-point and point-to-multi-point replication abilities enhance backup and archiving strategies by enabling automatic backups to offsite storage sites, including data center to data center replication, allowing byte level replication across the Internet to remote TeraStations.

“The Buffalo TeraStation allows us to back up our entire network for a fraction of the cost of higher end systems while still providing higher end business functionality like hot swap, rack designs,” said Bryson. “Rather than just adding drives as your back-up solution, it provides a multi-faceted turnkey device that enables you to stream data more efficiently. That’s a win for everybody.”