



eCourier Selects Secure Data Service

eCourier was only founded three years ago but has very quickly become the UK's leading express courier company. It was founded out of frustration with other courier firms by entrepreneurs Tom Allason and Jay Bregman, who wanted to revolutionise the express courier industry.

eCourier immediately differentiated itself from the traditional courier companies on both value-added offerings and service in an otherwise commoditised marketplace. The company moved away from the hub-and-spoke distribution methods established by other major courier companies by creating a peer-to-peer network. eCourier uses an intelligent delivery and fleet management system to match incoming collection requests to the most appropriate motorbike, bicycle or van courier. It does this via analysis of real-time data including traffic and demand patterns, weather conditions and individual courier performance.



As well as despatching deliveries within milliseconds eCourier allows customers to track deliveries on a map in real-time as their couriers move from allocation to collection through to delivery and sends immediate proof of delivery emails the second a delivery has been completed.

The efficient use of mobile computing coupled with automation and GPS provides a highly scalable infrastructure connecting clients with eCouriers directly. The company has eliminated the need for the type of platform normally required to run a conventional courier firm. eCourier's eCommerce business model whereby most orders are taken online, allows it to reduce transaction costs and therefore pass savings onto the customer.

In a fast paced eCommerce business such as eCourier's, it is essential to have a highly resilient business continuity strategy in place. The ability to back up and restore data very quickly and easily means that there is little or no impact to the business when data is lost for whatever reason. With this concern in mind eCourier undertook a market analysis of the technology available, the capable vendors and their respective backup and restore solutions.

"In a technology centric business such as ours, the data is our most valuable asset," said Jay Bregman, chief technology officer, eCourier. "Without the ability to restore files or emails within minutes, our reputation for excellent customer service would be at risk."

The Challenge

eCourier is a reasonably young company and therefore doesn't have an infinite IT budget, so the backup and restore solution it set out to find had to be cost effective. It also needed to have a good strategic fit with eCourier's eCommerce business model and be able to handle both current and future business requirements. The main objective of the selection process was to find a function rich backup solution that was reliable, cost effective and guaranteed data recovery in hours rather than days in the event of data loss.

Specifically eCourier was looking for a solution that:

- Required no up-front investment in hardware, software or installation
- Was simple to implement and required minimum user involvement in day-to-day running as well as in case of incidents since eCourier only has a small IT department
- Allowed eCourier to perform automated data backups of its servers, PCs and laptops on a daily or hourly basis without the need for human intervention
- Enabled eCourier to back up and restore its website, a SQL database, Microsoft Exchange including individual e-mails and also files with one solution
- Enabled eCourier to make backups of data in multiple remote locations, as eCourier has some systems running in their own office, whilst the main application runs in a remote datacenter.
- Allowed eCourier to restore data very quickly in the event of a loss
- Automatically stores its data offsite

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- Included a high level security protocol (128/256 AES encryption)
- Was flexible enough to cope with current requirements as well as demands that are expected in future.

eCourier had already made the decision not to buy the more traditional backup technologies such as tape-based backup solutions given their disadvantages. Traditional tape-based backup solutions require many different pieces of hard- and software and tapes that have to be monitored and managed on a day-to-day basis. To add to this tapes should also be rotated and periodically sent off-site for additional security, which in turn makes a restore more complex and time-consuming "With a lean IT team, we wanted a backup and restore system that was quick and simple to implement, easy to use and that included round the clock professional technical support. Due to our ambitious growth plans it was essential that we were able to identify a solution with a lot of future-proof functionality," continued Jay Bregman.

Which Storage Strategy works?

In the past couple of years, online disk backup to disk solutions have experienced rapid development and the market is now maturing. Cost of disk-storage has decreased over the last couple of years coupled with the availability of broadband connection speeds at cost effective rates it is clear why many companies are choosing online backup and restore solutions rather than traditional tape based backup offerings. Online backup and restore provides significant advantages over more traditional backup methods in terms of speed and medium reliability. Moreover they are generally bought as a managed service moving the cost out of capital expenditure to monthly operational costs.

The online disk based backup solutions available now remove the need for up-front investments in software or hardware, minimise human intervention, thereby lowering IT costs, are easy to use and extremely reliable. The online solution allows users to use automated data transfer to a remote location, which can be replicated in more than one location to provide that extra security and piece of mind.

"I couldn't sleep easily at night if I didn't know that all of eCourier's data was backed up securely," continued Jay Bregman.

Selecting the right vendor

eCourier made the decision to trial Interxion's data backup and restore solution, Secure Data Service by recommendation. The company took advantage of the free 30 day trial. eCourier purchased the managed service solution after this trial in late 2004, as the management team felt the system proved its value very quickly.

"We believe that Secure Data Service (SDS) has proved itself to be a reliable and easy to use online backup system that more than meets our needs as an internet business," said Jay Bregman.

"In the future we intend to upgrade our SDS service to include Message Level Restore (MLR), which will allow us to backup emails on an individual email level, rather than the complete Exchange database," he continued.

Additional functionality eCourier is also considering buying from Interxion is Backup Lifecycle Management (BLM), which will allow the company to store archived data at a lower price per Gigabyte.

"SDS has proven to be a cost effective backup and restore option for eCourier as it is based on the utility pricing model where we only pay for the amount of data we actually back up and no up-front investment is required," concludes Jay Bregman.

The company is currently using the SDS service to backup 60 Gigabytes of data per day, but Jay Bregman confirms that this will certainly increase as the award winning company continues to expand.

eCourier has won several high-level industry and computing awards including:

- The National Customer Service Award in eCommerce
- The British Computer Society's inaugural Mobile Computing Award
- The Best Use of Technology Award at the Natwest Startups Awards
- The Department of Trade and Industry's Innovator's Award (Transport)
- The Chartered Institute of Logistics and Transport's Award for Excellence in Information Management.

**For more further information you can call us on 01 434 4900,
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