

Success WITH CA

BrightStor™

Customer Info AT A GLANCE

Company Name:

Sheetz

Industry:

Retail

Geographic Location:

North America

CA Solution Used:

BrightStor™ Enterprise Backup

Biggest ROI:

Eliminated the need for Sheetz to purchase additional tape drives as it adds servers. The savings of \$3,000–\$4,000 each, for 25 servers, has saved a total of \$75,000–\$100,000.



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BrightStor™ Enterprise Backup Restores Order to Sheetz Backups

“High energy” is a term that Sheetz uses to describe its convenience-store environment, and it’s an accurate one. Founded in 1952 by Bob Sheetz in Altoona, PA, this regional convenience store chain is still known as a family-owned business with friendly employees and a “total customer focus.” With more than 270 locations in five states, Sheetz ties it all together with a network of technology that provides true 21st-century convenience for customers. Sheetz allows customers to interact with the store in the quickest, most convenient way possible — whether it’s to buy gas and drive away without walking into the store, or to grab a quick lunch of a sandwich and salad, “made to order,” simply by pointing at menu choices on a touch screen.

This formula has powered Sheetz up the Forbes list of the Top 500 Private Companies, from number 232 in 1997 to number 114 in 2001, with \$1.9 billion in revenue.

Fast Growth and a “High Energy” Backup System Become a Drain on Resources

Over the years, Sheetz has faced the challenges of implementing technology in a fast-growing organization. “We hit a point at which we were bringing a lot of new systems online,” said Database Administrator Jarrid Magalich. “Our databases were increasingly growing and we were adding more stores,” he said. Sheetz currently adds new stores at the rate of two per month.

At the time, it made sense to add a backup system at the same time each new server was added. “We ordered a local DLT drive for every server. We also made every person who was administering a database responsible for their own backup,” Magalich said. It didn’t take long for this process to become unwieldy and a drain on resources. “We found we had a lot of tapes to change around. Eventually, it got to a point where we had one

person spending a good part of his day just changing tapes. Each morning, he would go into the server room to start the backups and then have to go back to collect all of the tapes.”

Another issue involved tracking the tapes, which Sheetz rotated on a 14-day cycle. “We ran into a lot of problems because we couldn’t easily see what was being backed up and when.” The backups themselves also became a drain on the servers.

“We couldn’t transfer data between systems, and we wondered why things were taking so long. Maybe a database would be unavailable because it was in offline mode doing a backup. We had a lot of coordination issues,” Magalich said.

Beyond those issues was the simple cost of purchasing a new tape drive along with each server. “And at \$65 per tape, even the tapes were expensive to buy,” Magalich said. “It wasn’t long before we knew we needed to make a change.”

BrightStor™ Enterprise Backup is a Restoration of Sanity

A year ago, Sheetz adopted Unicenter® from Computer Associates International, Inc. (CA) to help manage its fast-growing information systems. Knowing that its backup problems were getting out of hand, Sheetz looked to CA again, seeing BrightStor Enterprise Backup (BrightStor EB) as a solution to its backup problems.

BrightStor EB is a cross-platform storage management solution that enables companies to perform convenient backups and data management across heterogeneous system environments. Impressed with its functionality and integration capabilities, Sheetz purchased and installed BrightStor EB in October 2001. “We have approximately 50 servers in our server room right now,” Magalich said. “Probably nine of those are Sun Solaris running UNIX, six are Windows 2000 servers and the remainder are Windows NT.

“Now, instead of a server-by-server backup



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”

George Medairy
Director of
Information Services
Sheetz

system, BrightStor EB gives us more of an enterprise model,” Magalich said. “We can see what is being backed up and when. It's easy to see what was successful and what wasn't.” BrightStor EB allows Sheetz to view all machines being backed up through one view instead of going from machine to machine. In the past, employees would go to the UNIX admin or person in charge of a system's backup to inquire about a backup. Now, Sheetz employees can simply login to the BrightStor EB GUI through a browser and see for themselves.

Highlighting the change between the old process and the new, Magalich said, “With all of the servers being individually backed up, we had to change dozens of tapes every day and take them offsite. We ended up having a case of tapes for every day of the week. Using BrightStor EB, we have only seven or eight tapes each day. The cost savings in tapes alone was a big enhancement.”

BrightStor EB also provides a barcoding and management system. “Now that everything is bar-coded, we're able to know exactly which tapes we need at a given time,” Magalich said.

Restoring a database from a backup tape used to be a nightmare. Magalich explained, “I sometimes spent an hour or two trying to make sure I had the right tape. In the past, the tapes didn't have barcodes and there was no catalog of what was on them. Before I could perform a restoration, I'd have to scan the tape to see what was on it and what date was backed up to make sure it was the right tape. As time-consuming as that could be, though, it would be worse spending four hours restoring a large database, just to find out it was the wrong tape,” he said.

“The Restore Manager gave us a version history and told us exactly which tape we needed to use.”

Their backup window has grown, but only slightly. “When each server had a local tape drive, they were all backing up at the same time, usually at night, and we would have to close all our applications and databases.” By using BrightStor EB to backup databases reliably online, Sheetz can better manage the system time allotted to perform routine system maintenance and backups. A range of different agent products now lets them perform their backups without shutting down systems. “BrightStor gives us a great deal of flexibility, because it lets us back up all of our systems online, any time, without having to shut down any systems.”

Focusing Staff on the Business (Not the Technology)

In the near future, Sheetz plans to start implementing a SAN. “In addition, BrightStor EB creates a file system for a disk backup. We can have our current backup onsite at all times, and also back it up to a tape over the network during off-peak hours,” Magalich said.

George Medairy, Director of Information Services for Sheetz, said, “I do know that the integration of BrightStor solutions and Unicenter have provided significant time savings for us. That savings will translate into better resource utilization in fixing and eliminating problems. It also allows us to keep our backup processes going with existing staff.

“With BrightStor EB, we've eliminated an hour daily in the review of error logs, and half of an FTE for tape processing and controls. We can more efficiently allocate existing staff to value-added processes, rather than having them spend time on routine efforts,” Medairy said.



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