

Case study: Online backup at the PWG Real Estate Foundation in Zurich

PWG, a non-profit foundation in Zurich whose goal is to preserve cost-efficient living and commercial space, was founded in 1990. In the year 2008, the foundation rented out almost 1,100 apartments and just under 150 commercial premises in 137 properties around the city; its assets are worth over 332 million CHF.



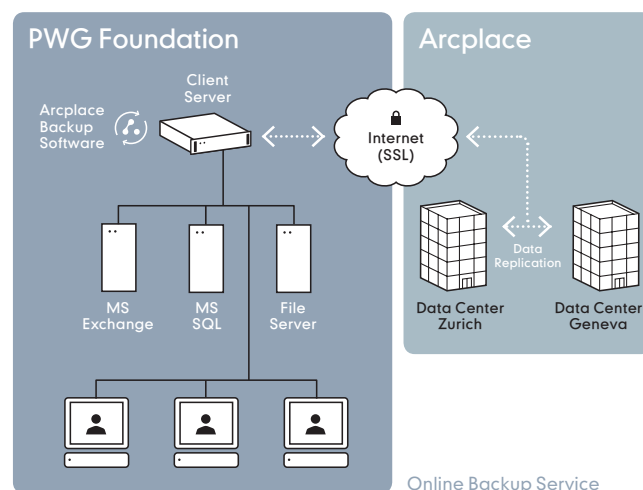
PWG manages its properties itself, paying special attention to the revaluation of the existing portfolio. For projects involving the construction of new buildings or the renovation of existing ones, the foundation strives to ensure that the architecture is contemporary, carefully planned, and designed bearing aesthetics, price efficiency and maintenance costs in mind.

PWG had been looking for a new backup solution for quite some time to cope with the ever growing volume of business and number of properties, as well as corporate governance requirements and public law interests. Up until the spring of 2009, PWG's important business data was still backed up on tapes and manually administered. Tape-based data backup, however, proved to be too unreliable and expensive due to the sensitivity and high price of the tape drives, the long recovery times and the time-consuming tape administration. Moreover, the existing backup system was too rigid and inflexible and did not have sufficient capacity to offer the scalability needed, nor did it allow access by several employees.

PWG was convinced of the general benefits of an online backup solution at an early stage, the only thing lacking was the right solution. After reading a specialist article on the company Arcplace, PWG got in touch online with the

Zurich-based backup and archiving specialists in April 2009. Within a few days, an Arcplace employee had come to the PWG premises and demonstrated the added value by means of a sample solution. After that, everything went very quickly. Not long after this, the PWG Management Board and Foundation Committee approved the offer and placed an order for the Arcplace Online Backup Service. The implementation of the project went just as fast. The entire procedure, from the first contact between PWG and Arcplace through to the launch of the complete solution, took just 10 days.

As PWG already had a backup server, Arcplace did not have to set up any of its own hardware on site and was able to install its software on the existing server. Integrating the software into the IT architecture at PWG was then quick and simple. From the very first day, the application ran faultlessly. The employees of PWG can now decide themselves which data should be backed up and how. Furthermore, PWG can perform restores on its own by means of an integrated interface, i.e. it does not have to depend on anyone to carry out this work. It has already made successful use of this feature in several test runs, and has even performed the restores without any problems during an emergency. The system has been running smoothly since the end of April.



"We are very happy with both the online backup solution from Arcplace and the support from the Arcplace service team. It is crucial that an institution of our size with numerous business partners from various sectors have a high-performance and secure backup of this caliber," confirms Daniel Corbellini, IT Manager in the Purchasing and Organization Department at PWG. "Along with the financial benefits, improved efficiency and revision

security, for us the online backup is a trust-building measure with respect to our business partners and the public. The solution also ensures absolute security for our productive data.”

Online backup combines the benefits of local and central data backup. The data to be backed up is first stored on a hard drive on the backup server of PWG (in the cache) directly on site. It can then be accessed quickly, even if there is an interruption in the Internet connection. The disaster recovery copies are then strongly encrypted and sent online to Arcplace’s highly secure data centers in Zurich and Geneva, where they are backed up redundantly. Even if the hardware at PWG is completely damaged as a result of fire, flooding or storms, there is a full backup of data in both centers. Advanced security and authentication processes ensure that the customer data is encrypted at all times (during the transfer and backup) and for all people. The key to the data is exclusively owned by PWG.

PWG is now backing up all its business data with the new Online Backup Service. The backed up systems include a Microsoft environment with various MS SQL databases, file systems and a Small Business Server with Exchange. Alongside this, database dumps of Progress, Access and Postgres databases from Linux servers are backed up, as these applications have their own backup and maintenance routines, also backed up is the CAD data. The volume of data to be backed up comes to roughly 290 GB per full backup.

Pre-defined backup sets facilitate the work of the PWG employees. Due to the agentless architecture, fast integration of various workstations and access from diverse departments is possible. The backup technology used does not require any software installation on the systems to be backed up. A backup software installation per site is sufficient for backing up all systems. This significantly reduces the time and effort required during roll-out and operation, as no individual backup agents or plug-ins need to be installed on the PWG systems, which also eliminates the need for maintenance.

The online backup system is intuitively designed so that the training of PWG employees could basically be limited to two screen shots, three explanatory sentences and a test demonstration that took just a few minutes. According to Daniel Corbellini, this short training was more than enough. “The solution couldn’t have been easier to understand. Since training, the system has never been used in error by the employees.” Due to the solution’s user friendliness, the PWG bookkeeping has now also been directly integrated into the backup process. The employees can and may perform their own backups. Instead of having to master a complex and confusing front-end, all it takes is two or three clicks for them to back up the data. After the intermediate storage, the entry for test clients is created from the backup solution.

The initial full backup took place on site at PWG on hard drives. These were then brought to one of the Arcplace data centers and backed up again there. All other backups take place locally and online. Here, only the data that has changed in comparison with the previous version is backed up (de-duplication) and the size is reduced even further thanks to a very efficient compression procedure. This considerably enhances the efficiency of the backup, while the lower volume of data simultaneously reduces costs. Regardless of the number of systems to be backed up and backup software installations, the foundation only pays for the actual volume of data backed up, which allows it to implement simple and transparent budgeting and saves having to invest in hardware and software. As the Arcplace software supports a wide range of operating systems and databases, it can be used for servers, PCs and laptops and is suitable for data volumes from 10 GB to 100 TB, it offers PWG the flexibility needed for expansion.

“Arcplace has offered this service since the end of last year. However, it is based on proven technology and has already successfully undergone numerous practical tests. Our company is renowned for its archiving solutions, but with the Online Backup Solution we are expanding our business field and now also securing the productive data of our customers. In this way, we are enabling business continuity for their data. PWG is a good example here of a successful and productive cooperation,” concludes Robbert Spierings, Managing Director at Arcplace.

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