#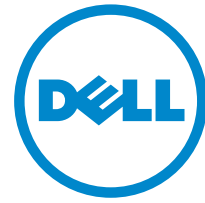 Current Technologies leverages partnership with Dell to help the nation's fastest-growing county bring backups up to speed

- **Services**
- **Storage**
- **Virtualization**

> "Dell's combination of presales technical resources, training and competitive deal pricing, on top of a unique product line for storage, gives us a striking advantage."
>
> *Mark Rhodes, Vice President, IT Consulting Services, Current Technologies Corporation*

Partner Profile

Company:	Current Technologies Corporation
Industry:	Technology
Country:	United States
Employees:	30
Web:	www.currenttech.net

Business Need
In the event of a server failure, Kendall County, Illinois would have lost as much as 24 hours' worth of data and required at least three days to recover. The county needed better disaster recovery capabilities, so it turned to Current Technologies Corporation, its longtime service provider and a Dell™ Certified Partner.

Solution
Current Technologies worked with Dell to craft a solution whereby Kendall County virtualized all of its servers and moved all data storage to Dell EqualLogic™ iSCSI SANs, which back up among themselves using built-in snapshotting and replication functionality. Now if a server fails, the county can recover the machine in one hour and lose 30 minutes' worth of data at most.

Partner Benefits
- **82% increase in Dell sales revenue**
- **Faster access to product expertise**
- **More flexibility in price negotiations**
- **Product demos by local Dell reps improve comfort level for prospective customers**
- **Dell PartnerDirect Deal Registration Tool helps partners protect revenues**

Customer Benefits
- **48-fold reduction in recovery point objective (30 minutes vs. 24 hours)**
- **72-fold reduction in recovery time objective (1 hour vs. 3 days)**
- **$2,500/year savings on backup software licensing**
- **$20,000 savings on replacement of backup hardware**
- **75% reduction in number of physical servers**
- **$10,000 cost avoidance on new air conditioner**
- **4-5 hours/week reclaimed for network administrator**

For the fastest-growing county in the United States, disaster recovery is a big deal. Kendall County, Illinois, which is in the Chicago metropolitan area, must optimize the availability of IT systems for its sheriff's office, county and court administration, health department and courthouse, among other departments. So for Current Technologies Corporation, an IT service provider to local governments including Kendall County, maintaining partnerships with the right hardware and software vendors is a big deal.

Until recently, Current Technologies worked primarily with HP. Now the firm is a Dell Certified Partner that often recommends Dell hardware in lieu of HP machines. In fact, when Current Technologies customers are looking for storage solutions, the firm almost always recommends Dell EqualLogic iSCSI SANs.

"We did a lot of work with HP in the past, but today many of our customers indicate a preference for the Dell product line," says Mark Rhodes, vice president, IT consulting services at Current Technologies. "Dell EqualLogic iSCSI SANs are the most cost-effective and full-featured storage products available, so 99 percent of the time, that's what we propose."

Sales support makes all the difference

By joining the Dell PartnerDirect program, Current Technologies gained access to a wide range of Dell resources, both before and after a sale is complete. "Dell gives us more personal attention on the sales side," Rhodes says. "Dell has a team of outside sales reps dedicated to its partners. When we need a demo for a prospective customer, a local Dell rep can do it. This increases the comfort level of the prospect. Another value-add of the PartnerDirect program is the ability to bounce questions off of the Dell reps."

Dell also supports its partners in offering highly competitive pricing. "The Dell team is extremely helpful with putting together configurations and then giving us flexibility in price negotiation," says Rhodes.

Current Technologies frequently uses Dell PartnerDirect's Deal Registration Tool. Registering a deal takes only a few minutes, and Dell provides approval or denial within a day or two. "It's pretty much a slam dunk," says Rhodes. "We design a solution for a prospective customer and register the deal. If it gets approved, we have the upper hand. As a Dell Certified Partner, we can offer the lowest price possible, and we know we won't have to compete on price with Dell's direct sales teams or with other Dell partners."

Ultimately, working with Dell is making the service provider more competitive, which is benefitting the bottom line. From 2008, when Current Technologies was a Dell Registered Partner, to 2009, when it was a Dell Certified Partner, the firm's Dell sales revenue increased by 82 percent.

"When we contact our Dell inside sales representative, she responds very quickly," says Rhodes. "Dell's rapid

Technology at Work

Services	
Dell™ PartnerDirect	
Dell Support Services	

Hardware	
Dell EqualLogic™ PS5000X and PS6000X iSCSI SANs	

Software	
VMware® vSphere 4.0	
Windows Server® 2008 and 2003	

turnaround on quotes and technical questions helps us close sales by keeping the momentum going on proposals. Dell's combination of presales technical resources, training and competitive deal pricing, on top of a unique product line for storage, gives us a striking advantage."

Partner status translates to success with customers

When Kendall County approached Current Technologies about updating its disaster recovery processes, the firm took full advantage of the Dell PartnerDirect program. "This project is a perfect example of a solution that would not have been possible without the Dell relationship," says Rhodes. "Our status as a Dell Certified Partner was a key component in giving us the tools and knowledge to craft the solutions we offered Kendall County."

All of the county's servers used direct-attached storage, which was backed up to tape nightly using Symantec Backup Exec. "As our data and equipment became increasingly critical, we started to wonder what would happen if one of our buildings was destroyed," says Darryl Kollins, network administrator for Kendall County. "We determined that getting our servers up and running again would take us at least three days, and we might lose as much as 24 hours' worth of data. That was not acceptable for a lot of the users and information we were supporting."

Current Technologies had provided IT solutions to the county for years, so the firm was a natural choice when Kollins wanted help evaluating disaster recovery solutions. Kendall County considered using a popular image-based system recovery product, but Current Technologies had concerns about any software-based solution.

"Software-based image backups consume server resources, impacting server performance, which limits how often backups can run," Rhodes explains. "The county wanted a tight recovery point objective (RPO) to minimize the amount of data that

would be lost in a disaster. With an image-based software solution, the county would have backed up data twice a day at most, which means its RPO would have been several hours or more."

With the help of Dell's presales technical support team, Current Technologies put together a proposal suggesting that the county virtualize its servers with VMware and store data on SAN devices that would share copies of data, for disaster recovery purposes, using built-in snapshotting and replication features. A major advantage of this approach is that it would offload all data transfer to the storage devices, so backups wouldn't affect server performance.

The county saw the wisdom in this proposal and evaluated storage solutions from EMC, NetApp, HP and Dell EqualLogic. "When it came to price and functionality, Dell EqualLogic clearly provided the best value," says Rhodes. "A local Dell representative performed a demo of a Dell EqualLogic PS5000X, and his demo made it clear that this product was the right solution for Kendall County."

Redeploying SANs, no problem

Kendall County bought two Dell EqualLogic PS5000X storage arrays and deployed VMware for server virtualization. Installing and configuring the SANs was straightforward. Although Kollins had no previous SAN experience, he deployed the first EqualLogic unit in an hour and a half, and set up the second SAN in less than an hour.

Then he began virtualizing servers. The county has since decommissioned the majority of its older physical machines. "We've reduced our physical server count by about 75 percent, so we're saving money on power," says Kollins. "Our server room is a lot cooler now too. We were considering adding a second air conditioning unit before this project, but we've avoided that expense, which would have been around $10,000."

"Our status as a Dell Certified Partner was a key component in giving us the tools and knowledge to craft the solutions we offered Kendall County."

Mark Rhodes, Vice President, IT Consulting Services, Current Technologies Corporation

As the amount of data on its virtual servers grew, Kendall County added two Dell EqualLogic PS6000X storage arrays. The two older EqualLogic PS5000X SANs were located in different buildings, but Kollins wanted to move them into the same location, then deploy the PS6000X arrays in two other buildings. "I was shocked by the simplicity of this process," says Kollins. "I moved all the contents of our older array onto a new array, then shut down the older array. The data took time to copy, but it all happened during business hours with no downtime and no real impact to users. And I didn't have to babysit it. Total administration time was about 20 minutes."

Rhodes emphasizes: "The simplicity of making changes to the environment is a huge selling point. Dell EqualLogic SANs offer a lot of flexibility, and the older and newer arrays are interoperable. It's easy for us to recommend EqualLogic products because we know that Dell continues to maintain backward compatibility."

48-fold fall in RPO, 72-fold drop in RTO

Now the county runs a snapshot backup nightly. During the day, it performs incremental backups by replicating data among its storage arrays. The replication takes place every 30 minutes, compared with 24-hour backups previously, so the county

has reduced its RPO 48-fold. And its recovery time objective (RTO), the time needed to rebuild a failed server, is down 72-fold from three days to about an hour.

Kollins cites one instance in which a critical server failed. He mounted a snapshot and restored the server in less than half an hour. "We experienced 30 minutes of downtime," he says, "but it could have been a lot worse. If we had to recover from tape, this would have taken us much, much longer."

In addition to the improvements in RPO and RTO, this disaster recovery solution is saving the county $2,500 per year on backup software licensing and approximately $20,000 every few years on replacement of backup servers and tape changers. And Kollins is saving the four to five hours every week that he used to spend running backups.

Partnership breeds confidence

It didn't take long for the fastest-growing county in the nation to see the benefits of the partnership between Dell and Current Technologies. "I've worked with other consultants before, but they have never been as knowledgeable as Current Technologies," says Kollins. "Current Technologies is able to tap into the local Dell technical and sales staff to help with anything we need. That shows us the strength of their partnership, and it gives us a lot of confidence that we're making the right choices."

Current Technologies

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