



CASE STUDY: Unilever



ABOUT UNILEVER

Founded in 1930, Unilever is one of the world's leading suppliers of fast-moving consumer goods. In fact, 150 million times a day, someone somewhere chooses a Unilever product. GIO-ES at Unilever staffs over 550 IT professionals to meet the demands of over 200,000 employees worldwide.

Goals for Data Protection

- Eliminate manual checking of log files
- Consolidate backup administration
- Track performance against objectives
- Communicate results effectively

Results

- Centralized backup visibility and reporting
- Share information with end users
- Compare and manage server loads
- Independent audit of true performance

SITUATION: Brand Leader's Growth Strategy Forces Backup

Unilever is the leading consumer products company in Europe, with 49 billion in turnover (revenue), 247,000 employees, and hundreds of market-leading brands. Every day, 150 million people choose Unilever brands to feed their families and clean their homes.

Path to Growth

In February 2000, Unilever embarked on a 5-year strategic initiative called "Path to Growth," designed to accelerate top-line growth and margin improvement. The plan was to save 3.1 billion by 2004 from restructuring, global procurement efficiencies, and "simplification."

Since the initiative began, Unilever has consolidated brands and manufacturing sites, removed under-performing businesses, and simplified operations, especially in information technology. "Path to growth strategy across Unilever has a powerful central message—simplify. At least in IT, this really means centralize wherever possible and drive down costs," said Brian Tweedie, Infrastructure Services Manager at Unilever in Chester.

One of the biggest sources of cost and risk sat squarely in the crosshairs: backup. "Backup is a hot topic at Unilever, more so than at other companies I've seen," said Tweedie. Under path to growth, team and individual performance would be measured against specific metrics. But before Unilever could streamline their backup and data restoration systems and processes, they faced a few obstacles.

Simplification Challenge

The motto of Unilever is 'Meeting everyday needs of people everywhere'. A similar motto could easily apply to the 550 pros in the Global Infrastructure Services Organization - European Services (GIO-ES) group, who meet everyday needs of Unilever information users, including backup validation and reporting. GIO-ES began by developing a list of critical information needs and attributes.

One of the first things GIO-ES needed was an overall benchmark for backup—across mixed technical, geographical and organizational boundaries. “We were consolidating from a business perspective—tying together many business types and groups into ‘centers of excellence’ in IT. So we needed a consolidated view of data restoration,” said Simon Contini, Unilever Technical Support. “There is a huge benefit in giving business unit clients a global view of all their sites,” he added.

“The biggest push from business users was to for one consistent report on success and failure performance across all servers. One of the reasons we were pestered so much was that the success rates were lower than we wanted. There was no lost data, but there were several close calls,” Contini said.

Unilever also recognized that they not only required visibility, but that it had to be unbiased as well. Spending large amounts on complex backup infrastructure necessitated that the company have an objective understanding of true performance, reliability and cost. They believed it would have to come from a credible, proven 3rd party tool.

Most importantly, Unilever needed to eliminate the time and the cost they were expending if they were going to meet their directive. The manual process of seeking out success and failures was not getting to the root of the problem often enough or quickly enough. “We could only do a handful of investigations and reports a week. It was a case of the squeaky wheel getting the grease, and it was becoming a full time job for a couple of people just within one datacenter,” said Stephen Booth, Storage Technology Manager in the Global Technology Services division of Unilever. Contini added: “We just didn’t have the data at our disposal, and hiring a huge team to try to get it manually was not an option.”

“What we were looking for was someone who could fill a hole in the market,” said Tweedie.

SOLUTION: Bocada Provides Independent Global View, Results

From their global headquarters in Chester, England, GIO-ES began looking for tools that could provide accurate, ongoing insight into their complex backup systems. As it turned out, serendipity played a role: In a job interview, an applicant described a product called BackupReport® that grabbed the team’s attention.

The initial test validation spurred a purchase and local deployment, followed by a rollout to all of Europe—where assets are physically dispersed but services are centrally managed. BackupReport was also deployed at the local business unit level, both as an initial audit of the backup environment and an ongoing exception reporting and troubleshooting tool.

The product met their demanding standards and has become part of their daily operations. “BackupReport allows a business view—they can troubleshoot the issues of a specific business, and even the most important information within that business. In other words, they can provide value in a way the internal customer can understand, without having to discuss server names or other IT-specific details,” said Contini.

“We publish them all [reports] for everyone to see, and everyone can see everyone else’s success rates,” he added. “As growing markets emerge, our ability to have a consolidated global standard will be even more critical.”

“Our backup success rates went up significantly after installing BackupReport,” said Booth, though he admits that prior to BackupReport true success rates simply weren’t known. In the end, hitting the service level performance is all that matters: “We ended up with a 99% success rate across Europe,” he concluded.

Today, and into the Future

First the test validation, then Europe, then the world. BackupReport was recently adopted as a Unilever global standard. Further, Unilever is looking to extend their use of Bocada tools as well. “Chargeback functionality will help us justify massive investments—for example six man-years to upgrade to the next version of tape technology,” said Booth. They will also be investigating the newer functionality from Bocada that reports on library performance and utilization. “From my techie view, the ability to see reports on drive and library utilization would be great,” adds Contini. “Now we take Bocada for granted. We could never envision doing manually what Bocada does for us. With BackupReport, we simply provide improved service with lower costs,” added Contini.

“We use management consoles in other areas of IT, usually from the big vendors. But it carries a huge benefit that Bocada is independent. Everyone’s anxious about data integrity.”

— **Simon Contini, Unilever Technical Support**