Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District Ensures Modern Workplace Communications Are Fully Compliant With 30-Year Data Retention Regulations

Success Highlights

• Responsive and granular restore capabilities across Microsoft 365 workloads
• Teams communications will be backed up in compliance with strict government regulations on data retention
• Improved employee offload process.

Customer Profile

The Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewerage District (MMSD) is a regional government agency that provides water reclamation, environmental and flood management services for about 1.1 million people in 28 communities in the Greater Milwaukee Area. They have about 275 users and about 3TB of data in Microsoft 365.

The Challenge

As the MMSD began to accelerate their adoption of Microsoft 365, it became apparent to the IT team that they needed more granular data backup and restore capabilities.

"If you try to backup from Microsoft's central admin portal you are rolling everything back, and we wanted more granularity. We have users that delete things on accident and they don't let us know past 90 days [when data can no longer be restored natively]," said Juan Villegas, senior systems analyst, MMSD. "We wanted to make sure we could backup a document, folder or permission structure at a point in time so we save our users time."

"Restoring at the site collection level isn't practical when we have users changing documents in those libraries every day," he added.

Having a comprehensive backup policy and solution in place was also particularly important to the MMSD as a government entity beholden to state data retention laws.

"MMSD must follow the Wisconsin Public Records Law, Wis. Stat. 19.31, et seq., which authorizes requesters to inspect or obtain copies of 'records maintained by the District MMSD is required to meet the standards outlined in Wisconsin Administrative Chapter 12 – Electronic Records Management – Standards and Requirements," said Michael Benedict, Application Development Supervisor, MMSD. "The purpose of this chapter is to ensure that public records in electronic format are preserved and maintained and remain accessible for their designated retention period. AvePoint helps us meet these legal requirements. "

Customer Location
Wisconsin, United States

Industry
Public Sector

Platform
Office 365

Critical Needs
- Insurance policy to ensure modern workplace communications are compliant with 30 year data retention laws
- Granular recovery capabilities to meet user needs

Solution
- Cloud Backup

"In the past, we didn't have a good way to capture things like email, so project managers had to take items from their inboxes and save it somewhere else. Some PMs were good about it and others weren't....The native backup only went so far and this was an area that needed to be covered, it was our insurance policy."

-Michael Benedict, Application Development Supervisor, Milwaukee Metropolitan Sewage District

Without a third-party backup solution, this created the occasional compliance challenge.

"In the past, we didn't have a good way to capture things like email, so project managers had to take items from their inboxes and save it somewhere else. Some PMs were good about it and others weren't," said Benedict. "Now we have everything and can tie it to an individual user or library and have it backed up. The native backup only went so far and this was an area that needed to be covered, it was our insurance policy."

The AvePoint Solution

MMSD's IT team evaluated Veeam, Metalogix (now Quest) and other providers before selecting AvePoint Cloud Backup.

"AvePoint Cloud Backup made sense for us. We liked the UI and the usability of it," said Villegas. "We don't want to spend a bunch of time figuring out the nuances of these backup tools. It needs to be easy and we need to transfer the knowledge of backup operations across the IT team and we've done that."

"Everything was super simple with icons, pictures and information nuggets so you can find what you need. I jumped in pretty quickly and learned everything in just half an hour with the team," said Noour Hinnawi, Systems Analyst, MMSD.

MMSD selected the unlimited retention option and is leveraging the solution to backup a broad set of workloads across Microsoft 365.

"Right now were backing up SharePoint Online, OneDrive For Business, Exchange, Groups, moving to backup Teams and more," said Villegas. "Right now our retention is forever and were working with our records manager to make sure we are in alignment with his goals."

Having comprehensive backup for advanced workloads like Microsoft Teams has given the MMSD team confidence for their adoption and roll-out plan.

"We are a government organization so our workforce is a different generation that is very email centric," said Villegas.

"We are slowly trying to show the advantages of Teams and collaborating in a shared space."

"We knew Office 365 and Teams is how we will be collaborating and we wanted a top notch backup and recovery solution that we knew was reliable, consistent and easy to use so we weren't paying someone to do it or taking three days to restore get something back up and running," added Benedict. "We don't want to not use the technology, but we want to make sure we are staying compliant. AvePoint allows us to be way more collaborative, use Teams and be sure its backed up."

The MMSD also appreciates Cloud Backup's ability to delegate administration and set different policies for different departments.

"AvePoint Cloud Backup allows you to do some specific containerization of Groups so if you have departments like Legal who have specific retention policies and other departments that don't have those needs it works. Its works especially well if you have governance in place before backing everything up," advised Villegas.

The Bottom Line

Cloud Backup and having an "insurance policy" has already provided value to the MMSD IT team via some high visibility restore projects.

The team has also been cleverly leveraging the tool to make the employee off-boarding process more seamless so they can be diligent custodians of their Microsoft 365 licenses.

"The other important reason why we use AvePoint is that we are required to keep this information for retirees and people who leave the organization, we have all their emails and content backed up so we can now reuse their licenses for Office 365," said Benedict.

About AvePoint

AvePoint accelerates your digital transformation success. Over 16,000 customers and 7 million cloud users worldwide trust AvePoint software and services for their data migration, management, and protection needs.