



Investment firm reduces risk, increases customer confidence

Ashford Capital Management implements backup and disaster recovery solution, ensuring faster, more secure safeguarding of customer data



“We can assure our clients that our major systems are well-protected in the event of a disaster with Dell AppAssure. We can better protect data and lessen risk, which means we’re also protecting our reputation.”

*Tim Ashford,
IT Director, Ashford Capital Management*

Customer profile



Company	Ashford Capital Management
Industry	Banking & Investment Management
Country	United States
Employees	31 employees supported
Website	ashfordcapital.com

Business need

Ashford Capital Management must ensure that its critical client information systems are well-protected and accessible whenever needed.

Solution

The organization implemented a complete backup and disaster recovery solution based on Dell™ AppAssure, Dell™ SonicWALL™ firewalls, and a Dell EqualLogic™ storage array.

Benefits

- All critical systems can be fully recovered in four hours
- Company can better protect data and lessen client risk
- Simple backup system provides scheduled snapshots every hour
- A 3:1 compression ratio makes deduplication fast and efficient
- IT can focus on the business, instead of worrying about disaster impacts

Solutions featured

- [Backup and Recovery](#)
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- [End-User Computing](#)
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Founded in 1979, Ashford Capital Management provides investment advisory services to individuals and organizations in multiple countries. The company's innovative risk management tools help protect customers against market volatility as well as downside risk.

"The way I evaluate technology is to look at how well it helps us get our job done, which in our case means protecting against risk for our customers. I'm confident that Dell AppAssure does that."

Tim Ashford, IT Director, Ashford Capital Management

A family-owned and -managed organization, Ashford Capital is highly focused on its personal relationships with customers—relationships that have developed over many years. Tim Ashford, IT Director, Ashford Capital Management, says, "Ever since my father founded the company, we've communicated to our clients that they can trust us." For Ashford Capital, that means having the right technology in place to maintain continuous system availability. "Giving our clients confidence that our systems are always up and running is critical to our reputation and business success," says Ashford.

The company's analysts, too, need reliable 24/7 access to systems. "Because our employees often travel to do research on portfolio companies, our work increasingly spans multiple time zones," says Ashford. "They need to be able to access systems day and night."

Company needed better way to protect critical data

To meet its business goals, however, Ashford Capital needed a new backup and disaster recovery solution. For many years, the firm would take system snapshots once a day and bring backup tapes to an offsite server for restoration. Although this worked, the company knew it wasn't enough. "We had several real-world tests, including a hurricane in 2011 that resulted in us losing power for five days," says Ashford. "Even though we got through that event unscathed, I realized that if a disaster ever made our hardware unavailable, I wouldn't be able to take the tape and restore the system."

That possibility was unacceptable. Even one day of downtime would mean the company couldn't access its Microsoft® SQL Server®-based portfolio accounting system, which lists stock trades, client financials, and other critical information. "Not having access to this data would put our clients' business data at risk, and it would mean we couldn't make trades for clients. Without that ability, we could lose significant amounts of money," says Ashford.

When the company started investigating new backup and recovery solutions, it soon realized that its options were limited. "I saw some technologies I liked,

Technology at work

Services

Dell Configuration and Deployment Services

Hardware

Dell EqualLogic™ PS4100 storage array

Dell PowerVault™ 114T tape rack enclosure

Dell PowerEdge™ R710 servers

Dell PowerEdge R510 server

Software

Dell AppAssure®

Dell SonicWALL NSA 2400 firewalls in High Availability

Dell SonicWALL TZ 210 firewall



but they would have cost us thousands of dollars a month without giving us the full protection we needed," says Ashford. "We wanted a simple solution that offered value and would allow us to get our major systems operating within four hours."

Simple backup system provides scheduled snapshots every hour

As it began its search for new technology, Ashford Capital was drawn to Dell AppAssure, a solution that delivers fast backup, replication, and recovery capabilities. Having seen the technology demonstrated at an industry technology event, Ashford was impressed with the product's ability to access emails and other files during recovery, as well as its snapshot scheduling capabilities.

After deciding to implement the solution, Ashford was informed that Dell had recently acquired AppAssure. "We've been a loyal Dell customer for 25 years and used many Dell technologies during that time," says Ashford. "We've always trusted them. When they bought AppAssure, it just strengthened our choice."

Dell recommended that Ashford Capital partner with Tri Delta, a technology company based in upstate New York. In February 2011, Tri Delta installed Dell AppAssure 4.7.2 at its remote site.

Company receives comprehensive deployment support

In addition to deploying AppAssure, Ashford Capital and Tri Delta implemented a Dell EqualLogic™ PS4100 storage array. "The features and the value of the PS4100 were a great fit for a small business like ours," says Ashford.

During the implementation of the storage array, Ashford Capital and Tri Delta took advantage of Dell Configuration and Deployment Services. "This kind of complete solution is complex, with many moving parts. Dell conducted an on-site demonstration

for us and did a very capable job of explaining exactly what we needed to do," says Ashford. Dell also offered technical guidance by phone for the ongoing support of AppAssure 4.7.2.

To protect its network, Ashford Capital decided to complement its AppAssure deployment with a Dell SonicWALL Network Security Appliance (NSA) 2400 firewall solution in High Availability. "I was interested in SonicWALL even before Dell acquired the company," says Ashford. "It's robust, full-featured, and protects well against threats. Again, the fact that Dell purchased the company just confirmed that it was the right technology."

Ashford Capital rounded out its new solution by installing a Dell PowerVault™ 114T tape rack enclosure, as well as two Dell PowerEdge™ R710 servers, four Dell PowerEdge 2950 servers, and one Dell PowerEdge R510 server.

Critical systems can be recovered in four hours, and company can lessen client risk

Ashford Capital can now recover its major systems quickly, and the firm has a solution that increases customer confidence. "We can't afford to lose our clients' confidence," says Ashford. "With Dell AppAssure, we can assure our clients that our major systems are well-protected in the event of a disaster. We can better protect data and lessen risk, which means we're also protecting our reputation."

After Dell AppAssure 4.7.2 was installed, the company conducted a full disaster recovery test for all its major systems, including the portfolio accounting system. As a result of the test, Ashford Capital was able to recover all systems in only four hours, as opposed to the days it would have taken previously. "When we did the test, we had every major system running again before lunchtime, which was unbelievable," says Ashford. "System snapshots worked without any problems, and all workstations

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were accessible. Recovery took only a few hours, and that's well within our recovery time objective."

Recovery process is greatly simplified

The company can now more quickly and easily restore its systems. "Now, if someone's computer is compromised by a virus or system shutdown, all I need to do is browse an image I created of that machine a week earlier, and within an hour I have the system back to its original state," says Ashford. This is possible because the backup and disaster recovery process at Ashford Capital is now a simple process, with Dell AppAssure providing scheduled system snapshots of key servers every hour, replicating them across a wide area network to the Tri Delta site. "Dell AppAssure is intuitive and simple to manage, which was important to us," says Ashford.

Overall system recovery is also faster, because Dell AppAssure offers a 3:1 compression ratio. This helps speed up the process of deduplication, a data compression method that helps eliminate duplicate copies of repeating data. "Dell AppAssure definitely provides fast performance that delivers on its promise," says Ashford.

Company gets comprehensive, cost-effective data protection

With the new Dell solution, Ashford Capital has gained the affordable data protection it was seeking. "We are getting the right solution at the right price for our business with Dell AppAssure," says Ashford. Even so, Ashford says that the solution's true return on investment isn't fully accounted for by simple dollars and cents. "The way I evaluate technology is to look at how well it helps us get

our job done, which in our case means protecting against risk for our customers. Dell AppAssure does that," he says.

IT director can focus on the business

The Dell backup and recovery solution also gives the company's IT department more time to focus on the business, instead of worrying about the impact of disaster on critical systems. Ashford says, "I don't have to worry about backup and recovery, because Dell AppAssure just works. And so it leverages my time to prepare for an actual disaster. For example, because the recovery process is faster, I'd have more time to work on connecting people to remote access. That's really important for small businesses like ours, where the IT staff would face many demands in a crisis."

Dell partnership extends beyond technology

For Ashford Capital, partnering with Dell has proven to be about more than just technology. "Throughout our 25 years with Dell, it's the service that has set them apart, even more than the software and hardware," says Ashford. "We've always had exceptionally good sales and support people to work with, and they've gone the extra mile to connect us with the right products and services." Dell has also provided critical presales support, something that Ashford Capital has benefited from. "We received excellent presales consulting from Dell for our EqualLogic Array, and that was huge for us," he says. "For such a large company, Dell really creates strong relationships with a smaller business like ours, and that makes all the difference."

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