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Tim Wolfe, Network Administrator, PacificSource

## PacificSource Migrates Data Without Downtime Using F5 ARX

**PacificSource Health Plans** is one of the largest independent, nonprofit health plans serving the Pacific Northwest. It provides medical and dental benefits to more than 4,000 Pacific Northwest employers and covers more than 143,000 people with its group and individual health insurance plans.

PacificSource wanted to transfer its large, and growing, amounts of data to a more scalable environment—without disrupting users or the business. To migrate the data smoothly and without downtime, the company chose F5® ARX® file virtualization devices. In addition, PacificSource uses ARX to streamline and automate ongoing data migration projects, freeing up administrators for other tasks.

### Business Challenges

The storage environment at PacificSource has grown over the years to accommodate users’ growing need for capacity and to comply with regulatory requirements regarding information retention. The IT organization was managing 27 terabytes of storage on more than 150 virtual servers and a number of stand-alone physical file servers, but keeping up with demand was still a problem.

“We couldn’t provide enough capacity with the stand-alone disk to keep up with the demand for network file

storage,” explained Tim Wolfe, Network Administrator at PacificSource.

The IT team decided to transition the direct-attached disks to a clustered Microsoft® Windows® storage area network (SAN)-based storage environment. This would give the company the ability to scale its storage very quickly as needed, but the organization still faced a major hurdle: migrating the data.

“We recognized that any interruption of access to health plan information or even to our own internal business data would

### Overview

#### Industry

Healthcare

#### Challenges

- Migrate data for major storage system upgrade
- Perform migration without interrupting users or business
- Simplify ongoing data migration

#### Solution

- Clustered ARX500 devices

#### Benefits

- Seamlessly upgraded storage system without downtime
- Streamlined and automated ongoing data migration projects

be completely unacceptable," Wolfe said. "We had to find a way to do a large data transfer without interrupting our business or our users."

## Solution

PacificSource enlisted Structured Communication Systems, an F5 Networks Gold Advantage Partner, for help, and Structured recommended F5's file virtualization solution: F5 ARX. File virtualization decouples the logical access to files from their physical location, so files are free to move and storage resources are able to change, without disrupting users or applications.

PacificSource evaluated ARX along with two other products, ultimately selecting ARX because it offered the performance and scalability the organization required.

"A big plus for us was that ARX didn't require any agents other than a single authentication agent," Wolfe said. "We didn't want to install agents because they are always a risk to system stability."

PacificSource installed a pair of ARX500 devices and, as part of the implementation process, performed a test migration of a small file server to the new environment. Then, after careful planning, the IT team used the ARX device's powerful, automated data movement policies and executed the migration for its network-attached storage upgrade.

"We did the migration during business hours, and it went very smoothly," Wolfe said. "We were able to consolidate several physical file servers and successfully migrate all of the data while users were actively using the system."

In addition, because the file storage environment was virtualized, the IT staff

"The ARX solution allowed us to perform all data migration tasks without any downtime and without requiring that we manually reconfigure client systems and applications."

did not need to manually reconfigure any client mappings after the migration. Since the initial migration, PacificSource has relied on ARX to handle other migrations just as seamlessly, he added.

"For example, the primary folder that contains our home directories was originally part of a 500-gigabyte disk on the SAN. It was starting to get big and was running out of space. We were able to add another disk and have F5 automatically migrate files to the new disk online. It allowed us to grow that available space without causing any user interruption," Wolfe said.

In addition to praising the product's performance, Wolfe pointed to another key factor in the successful deployment: the F5 system engineer (SE) who worked closely with the PacificSource team before, during, and after the implementation.

"It's pretty typical for an SE to come in pre-sales, and if you are lucky they will help you with the implementation process, too," he said. "It's fairly unusual to have them help you troubleshoot things or be available to bounce ideas off of after implementation. You can call Support, but it is nice to talk with someone who is already familiar with what you are doing and how your

environment is set up. Our SE was always there to give us a hand when we needed it."

## Benefits

With the F5 solution, PacificSource can now perform streamlined data migrations without interrupting users or the business.

### Seamlessly upgraded storage system without downtime

Wolfe noted, "The ARX solution allowed us to perform all data migration tasks without any downtime and without requiring that we manually reconfigure client systems and applications."

### Automated ongoing data migration projects

With the file virtualization solution, migrations are automated, so administrators are free for other tasks.

### No extra agents

With ARX, PacificSource could achieve its goal of implementing a migration solution that did not require agents other than a single authentication agent.

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