



# SYNSTAR INTERNATIONAL

## SUCCESS STORY

### *Overland's versatile Neo Series™ library meets IT provider's requirements for a mobile tape storage solution*

#### BACKGROUND

Currently ranked as Europe's thirteenth largest IT provider (IDC), Synstar International is an independent supplier of business availability services to blue chip companies across the whole of Europe, including organizations such as British Airways, Rover Group, Shell, and Zurich Assurances. Its solutions are based upon the highest quality IT support systems and services to minimize business risk and maximize business availability in the face of virtually every conceivable IT problem.

Synstar's business continuity division is dedicated to providing its customers with risk management consultancy and disaster recovery services to ensure the ongoing operation of their business in all eventualities. Its services include training and software solutions that teach companies how to plan properly for disaster and to react effectively to minimize or eliminate damage, in addition to a complete range of hardware and software IT systems, for systems replacement, restoration and information recovery. Contracts for this business unit typically run from between £5k to £1m, depending on the customers' individual requirements.

#### CHALLENGE

In recent months, Synstar has begun to receive a growing number of customer requests for a large tape library with several tapes and several hundred slots to provide an effective backup option in the event that their own tape systems fail or are ren-

dered out of service. In essence Synstar was faced with the challenge of finding one system that would operate with all of their customers' various media and platforms. It issued a tender that outlined the strict criteria that would need to be met by such a system. Synstar approached a number of storage vendors to find a system that could accommodate small to very large backup requirements, that operated with all the major backup software systems such as Tivoli, Legato, Veritas and HP Omniback, that supported all major operating systems and was multi-vendor compliant. Furthermore this needed to be a system that would support all of the main tape media such as DLT, DLT 8000, SDLT and LTO. In addition to all of this, the system would need to be mobile and able to be easily transported between business recovery centers or to and from customer sites.

Andrew Wilson, consultant, Synstar Business Continuity Services, explained: "On top of all of our technical criteria we had the added problem of the physical criteria that the system needed to meet. Whilst it is common for customers to send their tapes to us to restore at one of our European centers, we do also go to the customer site from time to time to carry out a restoration on location. In these cases we travel with a mobile recovery unit that we park in the customer's car park or outside their offices. It was imperative that the system we chose should not exceed the dimension of the doorway within one of these units."

> *"...a standard library doesn't move but we need to chop and change and reconfigure our systems every day. In fact they exist in an almost fluid state. The Neo has responded well to these circumstances."*

- Andrew Wilson  
Consultant,  
Synstar



## SOLUTION

While Synstar had initially contemplated systems from StorageTek, Overland and ADIC, the size requirement eliminated StorageTek and ADIC from the competition, both of which had strict manufacturers restrictions on moving kit. "With the StorageTek and ADIC systems, it would not have been possible even to move the kit from one side of the room to the other without having them do it for us. Fortunately for us the Overland kit held no such restrictions," said Wilson.

Synstar eventually settled on a Neo 2000 tape library from Overland in February 2002, which was supplied by key Overland distributor Hammer PLC, who was also retained to provide support and maintenance services. The modular design of the 2000 unit, which features DRA (Distributed Robotic Architecture), held great appeal for Synstar as it meant that the Neo 2000 could be split down to operate as separate units for customers with a number of small tape libraries, thus eliminating the need to invest in additional desktop units.

Wilson explained: "We can use the full unit with 14 tape drives and 182 slots for large restorations, or we can simply break out a two-drive, 26-slot stand-alone unit for smaller jobs."

Synstar was also attracted by the library's "hot swap" feature that enabled them to swap out components in case of a fault without losing the system's functionality, thereby ensuring a certain level of continuity within their own business. This was further strengthened by both Hammer's and Overland's strong regional presence, which

enables Synstar to ship the Neo 2000 to European locations without fear that it will not be properly supported.

## RESULTS

The second week of May 2002 saw the first live, on site test for the Neo 2000 and it performed well, in line with Synstar's expectations.

"The work that Synstar carries out is a true test of any system," commented Wilson. "For example, a standard library doesn't move but we need to chop and change and reconfigure our systems every day. In fact they exist in an almost fluid state. The Neo has responded well to these circumstances."

While Synstar's search for a tape storage solution was by no means influenced by systems cost, the solution that was chosen ended up being the cheapest one anyway, both in terms of initial outlay and return on investment. Synstar credits this in part to the modular, 'single systems to meet all requirements' approach inherent within the Neo libraries, and advocates this approach for any organization requiring flexibility and value for money.

For the future, Synstar intends to add additional LTO drives to their Neo 2000 system—as the first company of its kind to offer its customers LTO it has experienced a growing demand for support of this media. The company also speculates that any future libraries added to its stock will more than likely be from the same range in order to continue to reap the benefits associated with having a single platform supplier and a single source of support.

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