

The Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals

From Car Seats to the Cloud

The Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals excels at business continuity with Icomm Technologies



The Customer

The Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals (CIPP) is the only membership association for individuals working in payroll in the UK and has in excess of 5,000 professionals enjoying membership benefits.

The Challenge

When your whole disaster recovery solution relies on a small cassette lying on someone's car seat, you know it's time to up your game.

Torsten Roesler, IT co-ordinator at the Institute, explains that it traditionally used a tape-based backup system that relied on him taking the data home.

"Each night, the previous night's tape would be taken out of the drive, and I would take it home with me," he says. "We'd have a daily backup tape at my house, along with weekly backups. So at any one time, I would have two tapes at home."

Tape can be error-prone, and there is always the danger of lost media. And the tape-based system also ran into logistical challenges. As the Institute's data requirements increased in volume and sensitivity, it found itself unable to store everything on a single tape. Someone would have to be there to switch the tape during night runs. Holiday periods caused even greater problems.

- ❑ Error-prone manual tape backup system
- ❑ Huge increase in volume and sensitivity of data

Business Continuity

We can offer consultancy to hone a tight disaster recovery plan and support you to implement and test back-up, storage and data restoration proactively.

“
The new approach has radically reduced our Recovery Time”

Torsten Roesler, CIPP



The Solution

The Chartered Institute of Payroll Professionals (CIPP) chose Icomm Technologies to revamp its backup system after it outgrew its old tape-based solution. Now, both its sensitive working data and its server images are backed up to two separate remote locations in different parts of the country. Should the worst happen, the CIPP could be up and running again in a matter of hours.

The CIPP opted for Icomm's Cloud Backup that backs up all of its data. The data is automatically sent to Icomm's remote storage vault in Birmingham, and replicated to a satellite location in Manchester.

The CIPP's 600Gb of data includes its customer relationship management database, which Roesler describes as the Institute's "bread and butter". But the lion's share of the data consists of its Exchange database, which houses important email archives and appointment schedules.

CIPP also engaged Icomm's Ditto service, which regularly takes a snapshot image of the CIPP's critical server structure and provides fail-over for six servers. In addition to its Exchange server, it has a domain controller which handles file and print functions, a management server for software updates, and Microsoft's Internet Information Services (IIS) server, which hosts a number of internal web sites. The Institute also has a Citrix server, and the SQL database server used for its CRM system.

Icomm took the CIPP servers offline for a short period and made a copy of the images, taking the copies offsite physically and copying them to the backup servers at its two data centres. The CIPP's working data was then backed up onto a separate hard drive, but instead of taking it physically to its data centres, Icomm transmitted it overnight via a 10Mbit leased line.

That process set the working model for the CIPP's ongoing backup process. The working data is backed up daily. The Asigra backup software behind Icomm's Cloud Backup approach copies only the changes that are made to the CIPP's server data on a daily basis, minimising the CIPP's bandwidth requirement. The server images are less volatile, meaning they only need backing up to an onsite system once each week. They are then transported physically offsite every six months, and tested.

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The Benefits

"If a server suddenly breaks, or the whole building burns down, we're able to restore the images and have our servers operational within a matter of hours. The new approach has radically reduced our Recovery Time and Point objectives," Roesler says.

"Icomm can restore our server images to virtual servers, along with the latest data backup. This allows us to log in from anywhere and be fully operational."



"It is reassuring to know that our data is being protected and stored on UK soil at two separate locations for additional peace of mind."

In future, CIPP intends to run its own virtualised servers, upgrading from the Windows 2003 systems that it has had in place since 2005. "This will further enhance the concrete nature of our fail-over systems and business continuity," Roesler says.

Whatever his refreshed architecture looks like, you can be sure it will be well protected.

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