George Brown College Reduces Downtime from Hours to Minutes with **Acronis** Backup Advanced

Toronto College Cuts Downtime by 95 Percent, While Mission-critical Applications Gain 100 Percent Uptime

INTRODUCTION

With nine out of 10 graduates hired within six months of graduation, Toronto's George Brown College has established a reputation for equipping students with the skills, industry experience, and credentials to pursue the careers of their choice.

From its two main campuses, located across the downtown core, George Brown offers nearly 160 programs across a wide variety of professions to a student body of 60,000 (including those enrolled in full-time, part-time, and continuing education programs). Students can earn diplomas, post-graduate certificates, industry accreditations, apprenticeships, and four-year bachelor degrees.

The college's Data Center Operations team is responsible for administrative, student, and production applications running on dozens of servers within the IT operation of this very large enterprise. However, the college lacked two things that affected its commitment to make data readily available to users: the ability to rapidly recover failed servers and an easier-to-use, faster way to deploy a rapidly-growing Windows server population.

100% UPTIME REQUIRED

George Brown College had been using Symantec® Ghost® for deployment of whole servers, applications, and more, but that product required administrators to take machines offline to image their disks. The college also needed to be able to produce an image across a network share to avoid having to physically go to each machine for a deployment or recovery.

ORGANIZATION
George Brown College

INDUSTRY
Education and Research

KEY CHALLENGES
- Reduce server downtime
- Speed up deployments

ENVIRONMENT
- Large Windows Server population
- Multiple Web-based applications
- Large database

SOLUTION
- Acronis Backup Advanced for Windows Server

BUSINESS BENEFITS
- Mission-critical applications now available 100 percent of the time
- Remote location response times cut by 95 percent or more
- Minimized time, effort, and staff during rapid server population growth

The requirement to take a server offline also had a negative impact on deployments. "With Symantec Ghost, each server deployment could take a couple of hours," says Wayne Kyryluk the college Data Center Operations Administrator. To balance their need for easy accessibility with reduced administrator involvement and comprehensive system security, the college chose Acronis' cyber protection software.

ANSWERS PRIMARY NEEDS

Once the college made its decision, it moved quickly to explore the new product's capabilities. Over time it has found that Acronis Backup Advanced for Windows Server answers five primary needs.

- **Quick Installation:** Host OS images are installed in minutes from a SAN, rather than hours from a manual build.

- **New Server Deployment:** George Brown's IT group efficiently expand their network with ease and with the peace of mind that their security is maintained.

- **Less Downtime:** Acronis Universal Restore shortens maintenance windows for drive replacements and host hardware upgrades.

- **Comprehensive Backups:** All of the college's data stays safely archived for immediate retrieval.

- **Strength in Numbers:** With Acronis Universal Restore, systems can be cloned and developed while maintaining privacy and authenticity.

> *"Many of the college's systems are Web-based, and the college runs a lot of Web servers off its main database"*
>
> **Wayne Kyryluk,
> Data Center Operations
> Administrator**

COMPLEMENTARY TO EXISTING EMC® ENTERPRISE RECOVERY PRODUCTS

George Brown College uses Acronis products in a way that is wholly complementary to the functions of an EMC NetWorker® backup suite that has been in place for many years. Acronis is installed on every host and produces a new image several times a month that is retained on a SAN. This gives the data center a fully up-to-date, bootable image of each server and its applications, available and ready to go on a rescue disk if a hardware failure takes a server offline. "If a system goes down completely with a hardware failure, we can replace or repair a hard drive, drop in the latest Acronis image from the SAN and make it bootable," Kyryluk explains. "The IT administrator then repopulates the application data from EMC NetWorker's daily backup of all our systems."

REDUCES MAJOR ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITIES TO 'NON-EVENTS'

"Acronis products have simplified recoveries and effectively reduced them to non-events, minimizing time, effort, and staff as we grew our server population by several times in the past several years. It helped to have Acronis during our busiest development period because it is a strong change management tool," Kyryluk says. When they encounter a problem, administrators can immediately return to the last good system state and try another approach.

"WE TRY TO AUTOMATE EVERYTHING."

"Many of the college's systems are Web-based, and the college runs a lot of Web servers off its main database," Kyryluk says. "We try to automate everything. Rather than have one host serve an application, we use Acronis to take an image of one host and clone it elsewhere, creating multiple servers to divide the load and achieve redundancy. We just change SIDs and size disk partitions accordingly as we move to the new machine." Acronis software's ability to automate many day-to-day administrative tasks serves the college especially well in the summer each year during an annual eight-to-twelve-hour shutdown. The college takes advantage of this window of opportunity to complete a list of tightly choreographed general improvements. "Acronis unburdened us from the time required to perform maintenance and upgrade functions by eliminating the need to take down a system to complete them," he continues. "We couldn't complete all the work when we used Ghost, but with Acronis, we have time to do everything we planned."

MAKING THE MOST OF ACRONIS CAPABILITIES

George Brown College continues to learn new ways to use Acronis software. "We're exploiting as many features as we can," Kyryluk says.

For example, administrators can open up an image and extract folders if they need them, rather than go through a server recovery. Or they can use Acronis to direct Acronis backup images to a network share, a feature unavailable on Ghost. Restore activities can be carried out remotely from a central console, which makes it much easier for the IT team to remotely manage the college's dark sites.

ABOUT ACRONIS

Acronis sets the standard for cyber protection and hybrid cloud storage through its innovative backup, anti-ransomware, disaster recovery, storage, and enterprise file sync and share solutions. Enhanced by AI-based Active Protection technology, blockchain-based authentication and a unique hybrid-cloud architecture, Acronis protects all data in any environment, including physical, virtual, cloud, mobile workloads and applications.

Founded in Singapore in 2003, today the company is trusted by more than 5 million consumers and 500,000 businesses worldwide, including 79 of the top 100 most valuable brands.