

KEY FACTS

- Silverstring has helped increase visibility
- Silverstring has improved backup performance by 10%
- Silverstring cloud allows seamless global collaboration between practitioners and line of business
- Silverstring helps drive continuous improvement to mirror Pearson's global efficacy programme for education
- Silverstring reduced operational expenditure by 20% with automation and capacity analytics technology

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Paul Russell, Systems Manager,
Pearson Technology Data Centre Operations,
EMEA

Pearson builds blueprint for global data protection with Silverstring and IBM

Any business which creates, commissions and uses vast amounts of information on a daily basis needs a solid IT storage infrastructure. This storage and backup environment must not only be capable of supporting an enormous back catalogue of material, but also scalable enough to meet the evolving demands of the business and its workforce.

It's a challenge that the IT team at the UK offices of global media education group Pearson know well. A large proportion of the firm is dedicated to creating educational material, including

extensive content and curricula, as well as assessment, training and information systems for schools, homes and workplaces.

Alongside supporting Pearson Educational, Pearson's IT team must also ensure that effective data protection forms part of a high-quality internal support service for the organisation's sister companies, Penguin and the Financial Times newspaper. This includes every book ever published under the Penguin imprint.

Paul Russell, manager of systems management for Pearson Technology, works at the heart of the IT team responsible for the UK data centre underpinning the business. The extensive storage infrastructure his team oversees is protected by IBM Tivoli Storage Manager (TSM), which Pearson has been using since 2001 and supports huge volumes of important data.

“Every inch of our data is protected by TSM,” said Russell. “When I joined the business just over a year ago, the first thing I looked at was backups. Rather than sticking with our support provider, I recommended we switched to Silverstring. I'd seen its cloud-based automation application, Silverstring, and knew it would give us a much improved level of support at a lower cost than the existing provider. Most importantly, I also recognised that Silverstring would give us far better reporting and metrics.”

As with many other enterprise operations, the fact that issues can arise at any time effectively creates an ever-changing environment, both within the data centre and across the broader business. For this reason, automating the organisation's monitoring, alerting and incident management processes has gone a long way to increase visibility of the storage environment, as well as driving better backup performance.

“There are so many great quick fix articles contained within the Silverstring tool, which allows us to resolve problems ourselves, rather than spending time and money on support as we would have previously,” said Russell.

Using customisable dashboards, the Pearson IT team can now effectively generate an instant 'health check' of their storage environment via easy-to-understand graphs and charts. Headline information including raw statistics and performance comparisons can also be accessed, removing the need for time-consuming analysis.

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Regular reporting also provides a detailed picture of how TSM is performing on a day-to-day basis, flagging any backup problems early and enabling IT to take prompt corrective action. As well as providing insight into the different types of data volumes and storage devices used within Pearson's backup infrastructure, Silverstring also enables the easy identification of rogue policies that can contribute to unwanted volumes of backup data being stored.

"Just a few months after we began using Silverstring we'd saved around 20% of our entire backup infrastructure, which was mostly down to the incredible amount of visibility we had gained," says Russell. "Additionally, backups on large systems were not as efficient at data handling as they could be. Using Silverstring enabled us to optimise system performance and get the best from TSM's new transformative capabilities. Now, we can see where storage is being wasted. In another few months, it's not unrealistic to anticipate we might save a further 20%."

Pearson Technology's focus on continuous improvement mirrors the company's broader efficacy programme for education, which aims to use learning to make a measurable difference to people's lives.

Following on from the success the UK team has had with Silverstring, Russell is now compiling a business case that he hopes will see it rolled out internationally. "There's a real appetite to replicate the success we've had with Silverstring in the UK throughout Pearson's global operation," he says. "Having looked at the tool, my counterparts in Australia and the USA are really keen to see it introduced in those countries too."

The latest enterprise-ready version of Silverstring provides a global cloud-based management layer to complement the core TSM product, including additional services such as metering and billing, service tiering and provisioning. A self-service portal has also now been added which can be used by business stakeholders or application owners to help them collaborate with technical teams.

For international enterprises such as Pearson, the Silverstring cloud also allows seamless collaboration between TSM experts, server or networking engineers, database administrators, infrastructure delivery and service or application owners, in-house IT teams, third-party support partners and managed service providers – all on a global basis.

Russell can't wait to get going with this added functionality: "The new business portal is a great idea because it enables us to share reporting with our business units," he said. "This will really help them understand how we're working to key business goals and go a long way in making our TSM investment even more accessible and transparent."

Details of Pearson's global efficacy programme can be found at: efficacy.pearson.com