New Orleans recovers from a cyberattack and readies for the cloud with Veeam

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— Kimberly LaGrue
 CIO
 City of New Orleans

The Business Challenge

New Orleans is one of the top 10 visited cities in the United States—and for good reason. Nicknamed the Big Easy, the city offers multiple attractions such as the French Quarter, Bourbon Street, Mardi Gras, live street music and a famous cuisine that reflects the city's heritage combining French, Spanish, African and American cultures.

New Orleans may be unique, but it has something in common with many cities—it's no stranger to cybercriminals. Between 2017 and 2020, cyberattacks on state and local governments rose 50% in the United States, but what's more troubling is the increase in ransomware demands. During that same timeframe, demands rose from an average of $30,000 per attack to millions. Even if a city doesn't pay ransom, the cost can be debilitating. Baltimore didn't pay ransom following an attack in 2019, yet the city paid more than $18 million in damages and remediation.

What's even worse is that cyberattacks spiked during the COVID-19 pandemic, and that's where the New Orleans saga begins. In the early morning hours of December 2019, suspicious remote logins into the city's servers began. The IT team shut down Internet access and discovered a variant of Ryuk malware had infected half of the servers, so they tried to recover data from backups that hadn't been affected. Unfortunately, the legacy backup solution didn't cooperate.

"Several recoveries failed, so we quickly lost confidence in the legacy solution," said Bill Healy, Director of Operations for the City of New Orleans. "We didn't feel secure, so we opted for a more reliable, robust solution that would strengthen our business continuity and disaster recovery (BCDR) strategy."

Healy said Veeam® Availability Suite™ was already on the team's radar, so the decision to deploy was easy. Shortly after the ransomware attack, the team moved email off-premises to protect it.

"Making the decision to deploy Veeam Backup for Microsoft Office 365 was just as easy," Healy said.

Industry

Government

Company

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

New Orleans is a city in a class of its own. Located on the Mississippi River in Louisiana near the Gulf of Mexico, it offers endless opportunities for fun and entertainment. From world-class food and eclectic art to snazzy jazz and a tropical climate, New Orleans casts a global allure that attracts more than 17 million visitors each year. Founded in 1718, the city is home to more than 350,000 residents and employs approximately 4,000 people.

The Veeam solution

Veeam protects the IT infrastructure that helps make New Orleans an extraordinary destination, including the systems and data supporting city services, tourism and public safety. Veeam also fortifies New Orlean's BCDR strategy, enabling employees to work remotely during COVID-19, and it provides complete access, control and protection of Office 365 data.

"Veeam provides excellent data protection," said Kimberly LaGrue, CIO for the City of New Orleans. "Everyone who was part of the ransomware recovery process is breathing a big sigh of relief."

Veeam backs up 2 TB across 230 virtual machines to Pure Storage FlashArray, which replicates for DR. Veeam protects city services such as water and sewage as well as tourism services supporting the Vieux Carré Commission, which preserves the distinct architecture and historic character of New Orleans. Veeam also protects public safety services including police and fire.

"Millions of people visit New Orleans each year, so we have to have complete confidence that every city, tourism and public safety service is secure and operational," Healy said. "Veeam gives us that confidence."

One of the ways Veeam boosts confidence is by strengthening the city's BCDR strategy. Veeam offers easy DR orchestration and recovery testing, infrastructure assessment and documentation, capacity planning and "what if" modeling, and infrastructure monitoring and reporting.

"Knowing Veeam backs up the systems enabling employees to work remotely during COVID-19 is a good feeling," Healy said. "If we run into an issue, recovery is fast and easy."

Another way Veeam boosts confidence is by backing up Office 365 data on-premises, which provides total access, control and protection of city data in Exchange Online, SharePoint Online, OneDrive for Business and Microsoft Teams.

"Microsoft provides redundancy, and then it's your responsibility to back up data. Veeam takes care of that for us," Healy said.

Healy said the team is also thinking about moving the city's virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) to the cloud.

"Veeam is widely recognized for cloud data management, so we know that piece of the puzzle is there when we need it," he said. "We're counting on Veeam to help us ensure all data is available whether it's on-prem or in a cloud."

Challenge

New Orleans is like no other place in the world, making it a destination anyone will enjoy. The IT systems supporting city services, tourism and public safety are critical, so ensuring they're protected is of the utmost importance. After ransomware encrypted data in several systems and legacy backup failed to recover all of it, the city opted for a stronger, more reliable solution to ensure data is always available.

Solution
Veeam Availability Suite

Results

- Protects all systems and data supporting city services, tourism and public safety

- Fortifies the BCDR strategy so employees can work remotely during COVID-19

- Provides total access, control and protection of city data in Microsoft Office 365

About Veeam Software

Veeam® is the leader in Backup solutions that deliver Cloud Data Management™. Veeam provides a single platform for modernizing backup, accelerating hybrid cloud and securing data. Veeam has 400,000+ customers worldwide, including 82% of the Fortune 500 and 69% of the Global 2,000. Veeam's 100% channel ecosystem includes global partners, as well as HPE, NetApp, Cisco and Lenovo as exclusive resellers. Veeam has offices in more than 30 countries. To learn more, visit https://www.veeam.com or follow Veeam on Twitter @veeam.

The Results

- **Protects all systems and data supporting city services, tourism and public safety** "Our goal was reliable data protection with zero recovery challenges, and that's what Veeam delivers," Healy said.

- **Fortifies the BCDR strategy so employees can work remotely during COVID-19** "Veeam gives us the confidence that we didn't have with legacy backup," Healy said. "We know if Veeam protects something, we can recover it quickly and easily."

- **Provides total access, control and protection of city data in Microsoft Office 365** The city's IT team never has to settle for less than reliable backup and granular recovery of Office 365 email items, SharePoint sites, OneDrive for Business accounts and Teams' data. In just a few clicks, Veeam will restore what the city needs.

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