

Red Bee Media invests in media monitoring solution to prevent tape failure

- Red Bee Media invests £42,000 in the StorSentry™ solution to proactively monitor the quality of its clients tapes which hold television programmes, adverts and films.
- StorSentry™ reduces the risk to Red Bee Media's business operations by safeguarding its media, preventing tape failure, eliminating the risk of losing data and planning for future storage growth and helps to optimise operational efficiency

Red Bee Media specialises in the broadcast of digital media and offers the complete range of services required to promote, play out and provide access to broadcast content across all media, from television to mobile phones. Based in its Broadcast Centre in West London, Red Bee Media provides digital media distribution and promotion services. Red Bee Media, formerly a commercial subsidiary of the British Broadcasting Corporation, is now majority owned by Macquarie Capital Alliance Group, a fund managed by a member of the Macquarie Bank Group.

Best-practice media monitoring

Red Bee Media is currently responsible for handling thousands of tapes for clients such as the BBC, so it is imperative that its digital content is fully monitored, preserved and stored efficiently. In March 2006 Tony West, Head of IT, at Red Bee Media decided to look at better ways of monitoring and safeguarding its media using best-practice methods. The value of Red Bee Media's business lies in the data and content it stores for its clients on magnetic tapes. The company needs to feel confident that all the content stored on the tapes can be instantly retrieved and, that at the point of writing each tape a good performing drive is used, writing to a good performing cartridge to ensure its retrieval.

West explains: *"We look after media which stores television programmes, commercials and films and at any time this can be requested to go live on air. Unlike in other industries, where backups are only used for disaster recovery, our media needs to be constantly accessible and is the key asset to our clients. Bearing this in mind we needed to follow best-practice methods to reassure our clients that their content is safe. We also wanted to be able to proactively prove best practice in the case of an audit."*

Before StorSentry™ there was no media monitoring solution available on the market so Red Bee Media could not predict when a tape or drive in its data centre could fail via a media monitoring solution. Each new generation sees more complicated tape drives being introduced; making responsibility for monitoring tape more complicated than it has been previously. As a result, it was critical for Red Bee Media that any risk involved in storing their content is reduced.

West continues: *"Modern day tapes and tape drives are more sensitive than previous versions and are therefore subject to more complications. As with any technology there is always a risk and we decided to mitigate this by utilising an effective media monitoring solution. We needed to quickly*

identify if there was a problem with any of our tapes or drives, and if so what the problem was and how to solve it (for example, a factor as small as dust can impact the performance of a tape). We wanted a tool which could analyse our systems, so that we would not have to investigate each tape or drive to pinpoint problems.”

Proactively monitoring archives

West decided to look at the media monitoring solution StorSentry™ which had been developed by Hi-Stor (now Quotium) and is resold by Imation worldwide. Following a thorough evaluation West was very impressed with the tool which could allow his team to monitor its data storage media, identify problems and proactively reduce the chances of media failure.

Prior to installing StorSentry™ the IT team was monitoring its drives and tapes through error logs. However, these did not identify what the problem was – for example whether the issue stemmed from the drive or the media. StorSentry™ gave the team increased visibility of its drives, allowing them to locate precise information such as when media should be changed to ensure that content is not at risk. The tool also checks that the drive and media combination of the library is working at an optimal level, as well as establishing if data migrated from one type of media to another is required.

The installation of StorSentry™ took place within a couple of hours, with ongoing support from Imation & Hi-Stor (now Quotium). The software is non-intrusive and is installed on the media servers. The tool gives an overview of the state of the drives and the media, through a detailed inventory, and provides the IT team with three grades of alerts for media problems (warning, failure and critical). Red Bee Media has configured the StorSentry™ alert system to the highest alert setting so that it takes no risk with emerging problems and has a less tolerance for failure.

The tool allows the IT team to check if cartridges have reached the pre-set age or usage limit, and the pre-set error threshold. It also gathers information on the number of mount operations, duration of use as well as read/write deterioration rate. Within these alerts are clear advice and information on how the IT manager could solve the problem. This allows the team to schedule the maintenance at a time that’s convenient for the business.

In addition StorSentry™ helped Red Bee Media to obtain the optimum use from its drives in terms of throughput. The software provides an accurate overview of its archive allowing the team to identify if, for example, it is only using 10 per cent of a particular drive. By identifying a poor throughput the team can be more productive with the same number of drives. The company can also anticipate future growth by looking at how much tape is currently being used and look at the rate at which it is growing.

Red Bee Media is also working closely with the Imation team at its European Technology Centre in Neuss, Germany on producing audit reports. These give the team an expert overview of exactly what is going on in its data centre and identifies any potential problems.

West concludes: *“The installation has proved a great success. The software identifies potential problems before they occur giving us time to fix them, so we don’t have to worry about whether our magnetic tapes are wearing out. We are now absolutely confident that our clients’ data is safe because errors are flagged to us earlier.”*

"Our management team knows that it is getting the best out of our investment, and the solution alleviates the pain of day-to-day performance management at an operational level. We have been using Imation and Hi-Stor's (now Quotium's) professional services consultation to further identify and reduce the risks of storing content and we have already purchased more StorSentry™ licences."

About Hi-Stor (now Quotium) & Imation partnership – In January 2007 Imation and Hi-Stor (now Quotium) announced a Global Business Development Agreement, where Imation can promote and resell the StorSentry solution to large customers worldwide.

"Imation is very pleased to be working with Hi-Stor (now Quotium) Technologies to bring the StorSentry offering to our data center customers worldwide," said James Ellis, vice president, Strategic Growth Programs, Imation. "For more than fifty years, businesses have trusted Imation to help them protect their most critical data assets. With StorSentry, our customers can now access the most powerful realtime monitoring tool available and ensure that their company's data integrity is uncompromised. With access to an historical database of drive and media performance, StorSentry software is able to give recommendations on selective migration of data, recycling of defective media, and cleaning or preventive maintenance of library drives."

"Hi-Stor (now Quotium) has developed a unique solution for the protection of data with its innovative StorSentry solution. We are very pleased with the partnership with Imation, whose customers worldwide will benefit from this unique monitoring software. Businesses who rely on tape libraries for their backup and archiving can have peace of mind with StorSentry's comprehensive data integrity protection" said Fernando Moreira, StorSentry product manager, Quotium.

About Hi-Stor – acquired by Quotium in November 2009 is a leading provider of high impact storage management solutions. The company's award-winning applications and services enable organizations to reduce data loss risks and to optimize their storage assets. Leading companies and large industry players use Hi-Stor (now Quotium)'s innovative software to improve the quality of their storage management architecture and solutions. Hi-Stor (now Quotium)'s software solutions (StorSentry™ & StorBee™) are based on more than 10 years of high innovation R&D and Services focused on storage management by worldwide recognized experts. Quotium's tape products large customers and industry partners worldwide include Ascent Media, Bouygues Telecom, Dassault, EADS, EMC, Imation, Finanz IT, Orange, Quantum, Red Bee BBC, Turner Broadcasting Systems Inc. Founded in 1997; Quotium has offices in the United States (Boston, MA), France (Toulouse & Paris), United Kingdom (London) and is represented in Italy and Germany. Additional information about Quotium and its Hi-Stor products is available at <http://www.quotium.com/products/Proactive-tape-infrastructure-management.php>

About Imation – Imation Corp. is focused on the development, manufacture and supply of removable data storage products spanning the four pillars of magnetic, optical, flash and removable hard disk storage as well as consumer technology products. Imation Corp.'s global brand portfolio, in addition to the Imation brand, includes the Memorex brand, one of the most widely recognized names in the consumer electronics industry, famous for the slogan, "Is it live or is it Memorex?" Imation is also the exclusive licensee of the TDK Life on Record brand, one of the world's leading recording media brands. Additional information about Imation is available at <http://www.imation.com>