Healthcare organizations are constantly looking for ways to decrease overhead and improve patient service. Wake Forest University Physicians group (WFUP), a network of 500 physicians in the Winston-Salem, North Carolina area, implemented two technological solutions to do just that: EMC® NetWorker™ and the Flowcast solution from IDX Systems Corporation.

The Flowcast solution, WFUP’s primary billing and scheduling solution, runs on a cluster of Hewlett-Packard OpenVMS ES47 Alpha Servers attached to a storage area network (SAN) consisting of HP Enterprise Virtual Array (EVA) 5000 storage and a TL895 tape library. EMC NetWorker server, running on a Windows 2000 server, manages the backup process. EMC NetWorker for OpenVMS Storage Node routes the data to the TL895 tape library.

Prior to this implementation, WFUP’s IT department was performing sequential backups and writing directly to tape, which was a time-consuming and unreliable process. Nightly backups had to be checked every morning to ensure that the process occurred and all the data was covered—which wasn’t always the case. In addition, if a user needed to restore several files, the organization’s manual tape-tracking system would often take hours or even days to find the correct tape.

“Backing up our IDX billing and scheduling data, which runs on OpenVMS, is a critical step in ensuring the uninterrupted flow of revenue and quality patient service,” says Michael Barrick, lead programmer analyst. “Based on strong recommendations from IDX and HP’s OpenVMS group, we decided to implement an EMC NetWorker backup solution.”

The backup standard of choice

In its mission to move toward newer storage area network technology, IDX wanted a backup solution that made better use of SAN-attached tape libraries and could perform bar coding, set tape retention policies, and fully integrate with and support OpenVMS. Traditionally, OpenVMS servers require a separate backup and are treated differently because they can’t connect to an enterprise backup system. IDX also wanted a backup solution that would initiate snapshots from OpenVMS or the SAN management appliance, and then automatically back up the snapshots.
In addition, the company wanted a backup system that could run on a variety of platforms, had a cutting-edge tape library management tool, was supported by world-class services, and offered superior price/performance.

“It sounded as if we were asking for a dream backup solution, but we found it with EMC NetWorker,” says Harwant Sethi, national accounts technology advisor for IDX Systems Corporation. “Thanks to EMC NetWorker, we were able to stop making our own proprietary backup solutions and implement an industry standard that meets the backup and restore needs of our customers.”

“At the end of the demo period, we were believers. EMC NetWorker delivered everything it promised and more, and it is so stable and reliable that we no longer worry about backups.”

Michael Barrick
Lead Programmer Analyst

Because EMC NetWorker increases the value-add of Flowcast, it is the only solution that IDX now recommends and implements for backup and data protection.

“EMC NetWorker is one of those critical pieces of the puzzle that we need in order to provide a turnkey solution—other leading backup systems do not come close to it,” says Sethi. “It also delivers rock-solid investment protection.”

A fast, highly reliable, and time-saving solution
Put through a rigorous 30-day on-site test, WFUP technicians drew the same positive conclusions about EMC NetWorker.

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Today, backup times have been cut in half with no change to hardware, and it only takes a few minutes to read the e-mail report generated by EMC NetWorker which confirms the process was completed successfully. In addition, EMC NetWorker automatically monitors and tracks which data is stored on which tape. A media-management tool facilitates data retrieval and restoration within minutes.

“Our experience with EMC NetWorker has been extremely positive,” explains Barrick. “It makes life easier and gives us peace of mind because we know our backups are completed on time. The management time that EMC NetWorker saves us is incredible. We put that time to good use by performing business-critical tasks that previously kept getting put on the back burner.”

Support for EMC NetWorker within WFUP’s operating environment also drew praise.

“Support is outstanding,” concludes Barrick. “Our questions get answered in a timely manner, and EMC’s advice and solutions are first rate. If we had to do it all over, we would choose EMC NetWorker again.”