

# Westervelt Company Chooses Syscom Technologies to Deliver Backup Acceleration and Freedom From Tape

Syscom Technologies designed and delivered for Westervelt a backup and disaster recovery solution that frees them from tape woes and enables archiving acceleration of their backups.

## Accelerated Operations, Freedom from Tape

Syscom Technologies is providing Westervelt with a backup and DR (disaster recovery) solution that frees them from tape woes and has enabled them to achieve exponential acceleration of their backup and restore processes. The solution was accomplished in part by using the Data Domain appliance to deliver significant infrastructure savings as well as a dramatic increase in productivity that has enabled the IT staff to manage a major business change.

## The Westervelt Company

Founded in 1884, The Westervelt Company ([www.westervelt.com](http://www.westervelt.com)) is a privately held land-resource organization taking an environmentally responsible, socially aware, Highest and Best Use (HBU) approach to managing nearly 500,000 acres of timberland and natural resources. As a growing international land management company, Westervelt saw its enterprise data volumes growing substantially year over year. Protecting that data was becoming increasingly difficult with the standalone tape backup systems they were running. Plus, managing the tape media and getting it to and from an offsite storage facility was time-consuming and resource-intensive.

*The problem* according to Michael Smelley, Senior Network Analyst and Administrator for Westervelt, "We were running backups to tape nightly and operators were carrying tapes to an offsite location the following morning. Sometimes we also used our internal mail carrier, but overall it was a very time-consuming and inefficient process." Westervelt's tape backup problems weren't limited to the handling of tapes: the tape systems themselves were unreliable and becoming increasingly expensive. Smelley adds, "Like most companies, we had our fair share of issues with tape drives, tapes going bad during the process, and the like. Maintaining tape systems was very expensive. We

maintained five weeks of full tapes and carried our most recent full backup offsite on a daily basis, plus we kept quarterly tapes and yearly tapes, so over time that adds up very quickly."

In addition to Westervelt's enterprise data growing at a fast clip and the mounting operational costs of tape, Syscom Technologies designed the solution to include VMware virtualization software, which further increased the importance of establishing a fast, reliable and cost-effective backup and recovery solution. To address some of these issues, the Westervelt IT team initially looked at implementing a new tape library system. According to Rickey Grogan, Network Administrator, "We were running four standalone tape drives, one of which had gone bad on us. So, at the time, we thought perhaps a tape library system would work for us. A tape library was still going to require having someone onsite managing the system, but we thought it would have been a big improvement over the standalone systems." In the midst of these decisions, the divestiture of a business division drove a substantial reduction in the core IT group, which still had the full range of enterprise data management issues to handle.

*The solution* the Westervelt team requested was the simplest and most cost-effective solution available--and that brought them to Syscom Technologies specializing in designing and implementing backup solutions with simplicity in mind. The Data Domain appliance coupled with VMware fits perfectly into the picture.

According to Smelley, "A smaller operations team meant we needed a backup system that was a lot less hands-on. This drove us in the direction of disk-based backup and ultimately to the selection of Data Domain. We had already completed the cost



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**Michael Smelley,**  
Senior Network Analyst

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- Land Management

### Challenges

- Managing Backup Tapes
- Data Restore

### Solution

- VMWare
- Data Domain

### Benefits

- Less Time Managing Tapes
- Improved Restore Times
- Time for Other Projects

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justification for the tape library, so it was easy to justify the Data Domain solution, which carried approximately the same upfront costs as the tape library.” Grogan explains, “It was a pretty easy decision to choose a disk-to-disk backup solution. The traditional methods didn’t have any kind of compression, and certainly not the kind of compression that’s possible with Data Domain.”

The Syscom Technologies team delivered the solution and immediately began replicating their VMware virtual machines, Oracle databases, SQL Server data, and Windows file server data offsite via WAN, using Data Domain’s Replicator software. The installation was non-disruptive and the ensuing benefits spanned the full scope of their data protection efforts.

Westervelt’s delivered solution dramatically simplified their data protection processes, first by reducing the amount of data that actually needed to be stored to disk, enabling lightning fast, reliable backup and restores. Syscom also delivered a robust and flexible disaster recovery solution. “We had a facility that was just far enough away to qualify as appropriate disaster recovery site, but close enough for us to be able to drive there to test and implement our offsite replication target,” says Grogan. He adds, “We needed a solution to get the data from point A to point B and Data Domain provided a way to do that at a very low cost. So when our disaster recovery contract with an external provider came up for renewal, we didn’t renew.”

Since Syscom’s solution implementation with VMware and the Data Domain appliance, Westervelt has achieved 50x compression rates on VMware generated “.vmdk” files, and they have successfully restored a considerable amount of data from those files. Also, the IT team is now able to protect more of their enterprise data than before. Whereas they previously backed up about 1.3 terabytes of data, they’re now backing up nearly 2 terabytes at no additional cost. They can also rest easy, knowing that the system requires less staff administration and management. Says Smelley, “We can run all of our backups and not have to worry about someone being here to take tapes out, or to be here

on Monday mornings following holidays to transport those tapes, because our data is automatically replicated offsite.” With regard to performance, Grogan reports, “I had to restore some Oracle databases, each about 70 gigabytes, which took about 20-30 minutes to restore. With tape that would have taken about two hours.” He adds, “We also tested the new DR system. In one case, we backed up and replicated a CRM server over night. I came in the next morning and, within 25 or 30 minutes, I had restored the server and had it online and working with users logged in and testing it. That was from start to finish.” In fact, the backup process with Data Domain is so fast that initially one administrator wasn’t certain the system was working. “We had one person do a restore and it went so fast that they thought it hadn’t restored yet or something went wrong with the job,” Smelley recalls. “When they ran it again they realized it had worked and that it was just super fast. People now realize how fast it is, and that they see the obvious benefits of not having to pop tapes in and out.

These efficiencies enable a newly “lean and mean” IT staff to manage their workload and be more productive. According to Smelley, “Users count on our operations staff for daily restores. Our people no longer have to spend the time keeping up with the tape cycles, keeping track of which tapes need to be shipped off site, or worrying about tapes being overwritten and so forth. Now they’re able to spend that time doing other projects. The only challenge for them now is adjusting to how quickly restores are happening and believing that they’re really done!” He adds, “Not having to deal with tapes and transport them offsite was critical for us in managing our way through a challenging business change.”

The Westervelt team is now reveling in its newfound freedom from tape. Smelley observes, “As a company, we’re very big on what we call continuous process improvement – making it faster, better, easier – and the Data Domain solution was a home run in that regard. In a very short time, we’ve gone from 100 percent tape backup to less than 5 percent. Over time we expect to eliminate tape altogether.”

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