Erisa Administrative Services Partners with 11:11 Systems for Modern Business Continuity Strategy

SOLUTION: DRaaS, BaaS, M365

Client Profile

Erisa Administrative Services, Inc. is a third-party administrator working with the State of New Mexico to manage the enrollment of health and life insurance benefits for the New Mexico Public Schools Insurance Authority (NMPSIA). Through NMPSIA, which serves public-school districts, postsecondary educational entities, and charter schools across New Mexico, member schools are afforded the opportunity to offer quality employee benefit and risk coverages. Today, Erisa and NMPSIA support over 88 school districts and 75,000 employees and dependents.

In IT, Times Are (Always) Changing

With over 30 years of IT experience, Thomas Sipf has had a front row seat to the industry's swift and unrelenting cycle of transformation and modernization. "I date back to the old, old days of IT," he joked. "I'm talking the days of Windows 95." Of course, this rhythm of change is part and parcel to the very nature of IT. It is, as they say, the only constant.

No matter the technology, challenge, product, or company du jour, the "new school" always overtakes the "old school" in due time — before inevitably becoming old news itself. Over the years, Sipf saw this phenomena unfold with particular acuteness in regard to the idea of business continuity. It was a transformation driven not solely by the proliferation of more modern products and services, but also newfound attitudes, goals, priorities, strategies, and threats.

"Over the last 30 years, I've seen and used many different products and services for data backup and disaster recovery. This goes without saying, but everything is way different now than it was back in the day, especially when it comes to our mindset," said Sipf. "Back then, if your data got wiped out or corrupted for whatever reason, you'd go to your tape backups. It would take hours and hours, maybe even days, to restore it. But ultimately, taking days to recover was not that big of a deal."

He continued: "However, if that happened now? Oof. It would be crippling. Today, losing access to your data like that could basically bankrupt your company."

THE RESILIENT CLOUD PLATFORM

CHALLENGES:

- Need for secure and reliable access to data
- Cost in time and money to manage infrastructure in-house
- Small internal IT team
- Rising threats and risk of unplanned downtime

SOLUTION:

- 11:11 DRaaS for Zerto
- 11:11 Cloud Backup for Veeam Cloud Connect
- 11:11 Cloud Backup for Microsoft 365

BENEFITS:

- Continuous data availability and business uptime
- More internal resources available for business innovation
- Simplicity in day-to-day management
- Modern, multi-layered data protection
- Zerto and Veeam compatible solution
- World-class support team

PROFILE:

- Industry: Healthcare, State, and Local Government
- Size: SMB

"The current cybersecurity landscape and the ongoing rise in threats, like ransomware, is something I take very seriously. I worry about it on a daily basis. That is why we've prioritized business continuity and invested in our backup and disaster recovery solutions with 11:11 Systems. If something were to happen, having the ability to go back in time to recover our data is a life saver. We rely heavily on our data for operations, so downtime is simply not an option."

Thomas Sipf, CTO and CSO at Erisa Administrative Services

As the CTO and CSO at Erisa Administrative Services, this is the stressful, chaotic, risk-filled environment in which Sipf must operate. Gone are the days of tape backups and laissez faire Recovery Point Objectives (RPOs) and Recovery Time Objectives (RTOs). Today, data and applications must be kept running, accessible, and protected around the clock. That's much easier said than done, of course. Just ask any seasoned IT veteran. That is why, when Sipf wanted to modernize Erisa's business continuity strategy, he decided to trust 11:11 Systems with the job.

Better Business Continuity with 11:11 Systems

Despite supporting tens of thousands of teachers across the state, Erisa is still a relatively small business with an even smaller IT team. As CTO, Sipf is the lone person in charge of managing, maintaining, and protecting the company's entire infrastructure. This means that, on any given day, he may have to juggle everything from data backups to troubleshooting printers to the state's enrollment website.

Needless to say, Sipf had an increasingly full plate, due to the demands of modern IT management, budgetary constraints, and a growing number of internal and external threats. This is why he set out to re-evaluate Erisa's business continuity and data protection strategies. At the time, the company did have a cloud backup solution in place, but the solution and the vendor were unreliable, to say the least.

"Our previous backup solution was really hit or miss. We'd often get these weird errors — certainly not the most comforting experience, especially when you're dealing with something as important as data backups," said Sipf. "We'd reach out to our provider's support team and then hope to hear back. Which never happened in a timely fashion, I might add."

But Sipf didn't just want to simply upgrade the company's backup solution. He wanted to modernize its entire business continuity strategy, which, in his mind, began with disaster recovery (DR). The only problem was, their current backup provider couldn't guarantee DR compatibility, meaning Erisa's backend machines wouldn't be able to communicate with one another. That was a deal breaker, according to Sipf.

So, he began to investigate alternative solutions. Ultimately, his quest failed to turn up a single solution. What he found, instead, was an entire suite of solutions and, most importantly, a partner to help implement them. In 11:11, Sipf and Erisa found a cloud service provider and partner that could not only help assuage his internal IT burden — in time and dollars spent — but also satisfy the company's security and compliance requirements.

"11:11 Systems is a wonderful partner with wonderful products. I've had zero issues with them. My backups have worked flawlessly. I no longer feel like I have to worry about my backups failing or having to spend hours on the phone with support," said Sipf. "11:11's solutions just work — and if they work, that puts time back into my day. I get to spend much less time researching articles and reading support pages, trying to figure out what's broken. Everything is just so much easier. I would absolutely recommend 11:11."

THE RESILIENT
CLOUD PLATFORM

"Affordability, Ease of Use, and Peace of Mind"

All told, Sipf completed Erisa's business continuity transformation by implementing three 11:11 solutions: 11:11 DRaaS for Zerto, 11:11 Cloud Backup for Veeam Cloud Connect, and 11:11 Cloud Backup for Microsoft 365.

With all three combined to offer ever-ready, integrated, and multi-layered security, the Erisa's data will remain safe and easily recoverable regardless of where it resides. Sipf also gained the benefit of increased visibility via the award-winning 11:11 Cloud Console, which offers the ability to easily monitor and manage workloads, while also being able to lean on 11:11's world-class account management, support, and compliance teams.

"With our former solution, even trying to do a restore — just a simple file restore — was very clunky and difficult to navigate. I would waste a ton of time troubleshooting. The platform was not clear or intuitive at all. With 11:11, everything is much simpler. It's very easy to go in and restore a file. I've done it. It's simple and it works," said Sipf. "On a few occasions, I even called 11:11 support with questions and got immediate feedback. It was a refreshing experience. They even reached out afterward to ensure the issue was resolved."

Beyond the console's ease of use, Sipf felt that 11:11 delivered a unique combination of quality and cost effectiveness. Other providers were not only overpriced, he said, but charged for key services — like DR testing — while 11:11 does not. Sipf viewed the simplicity and reliability of 11:11's DR testing capabilities, something Erisa needed to maintain SSAE compliance, as a significant differentiator. Especially as threats, both internal and external, malicious and accidental, continue to rise.

"We looked at maybe three to four other vendors and most were, I would say, ridiculously expensive. Take DR testing, for example. We do quarterly DR tests to comply with our yearly SSAE audits. We take them very seriously. But with some vendors, that was going to be quite expensive. They were going to charge thousands of dollars per test without us having much autonomy. Why would I pay for something that I can't test on my own?" said Sipf. "With 11:11, we get exactly what we need out of our DR solution — affordability, ease of use, and peace of mind. We're also able to accurately, easily, and cost effectively perform DR tests we need to maintain compliance and keep our data secure."

"A Life Saver" Amidst Rising Threats

Given Sipf's long tenure in the industry, data security has always been on his mind. But recent events, he says, including the ongoing evolution of threats and the damage they can wreak has pushed its importance to the forefront.

"The cybersecurity landscape has changed so drastically over the years that it's forced us — and the industry at large — to change how we manage our businesses," said Sipf. "Don't get me wrong, we had viruses back in the day that could be destructive. But compared to the ransomware of today? We're talking about a whole different level of damage and frequency. I feel like I'm seeing news of a new company being compromised every other day now. It's just a constant worry in the back of my mind."

Just recently, Sipf witnessed the destructive power of ransomware right in Erisa's backyard when a local university was infiltrated. The attack took down the school's network, resulting in cancelled classes and disruptions in the employee payroll systems. It's no wonder why Sipf was eager to partner with 11:11 for Erisa's new-look business continuity strategy. In a world where new threats seem to materialize daily — evolving in sophistication and increasing in frequency — the worst place for an IT administrator to be is alone.

"The current cybersecurity landscape and the ongoing rise in threats, like ransomware, is something I take very seriously. I worry about it on a daily basis," said Sipf. "That is why we've prioritized business continuity and invested in our backup and disaster recovery solutions with 11:11 Systems. If something were to happen, having the ability to go back in time to recover our data is a life saver. We rely heavily on our data for operations, so downtime is simply not an option."

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MODERNIZE   PROTECT   MANAGE

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