

Karen Hayward, EVP and chief marketing officer, CenterBeam, says her company's services are tightly woven with those of Iron Mountain.

Integrator puts
Connected® for PC
and LiveVault® to
work for mid-market

By **Lafe Low**

Photographs by Anne Hamersky

MAKE YOUR DATA **GIVE**

BOTTOM LINE

A flexible, reliable data protection solution is a key part the managed IT services provided by Iron Mountain partner CenterBeam Inc. Using Iron Mountain Digital's Connected® for PC and LiveVault® services, the company focuses on disaster prevention, not just recovery.

IT CAN HAPPEN TO anyone: the dreaded blue screen signifying computer failure. But that doesn't have to put you in a panic—if you have a solid backup plan in place.

CenterBeam, a San Jose, Calif.-based provider of managed IT services

and Iron Mountain partner, aims to be that backup plan for mid-market companies. CenterBeam provides comprehensive, flexible backup and recovery services for an organization's servers, desktops and laptops. It handles help-desk services; desktop, server and network management; hosted exchange and other services; hosted compliance solutions; and project-based services.

Pure MSP

As a broad-based, full-service managed service provider, CenterBeam reduces the overall risk profile, level of complexity and operating costs for its customers. It has adopted a clear strategy of integrating the most effective IT components into a complete package to best serve its customers.

“We give our customers the ultimate flexibility to handle the dynamic environment in which they operate,” says Karen Hayward, CenterBeam's executive vice president and chief marketing officer. “Look at the complexity of keeping your infrastructure reliable and robust. What you need are different experts at different times.”

For example, when a company is opening or expanding an office, it needs a network engineer. When it's deploying a messaging infrastructure, it needs engineers and architects to design and implement those systems. It might not need backup expertise right away, but it will within six months. Once all those systems are place, though, few, if any of these experts need to remain on staff. “CenterBeam brings variable expertise when you need it,” Hayward says.

“Our company doesn't build proprietary or one-off solutions,” says Hayward. “We go out and integrate best of breed (IT solutions) to deliver a comprehensive set of infrastructure services.”

CenterBeam targets the midmarket, which it defines as companies having between 100 and 2,500 users. Such companies need enterprise-grade IT management, disaster recovery and backup services, but can't always afford the full range of protective services.

“Our fundamental value proposition to the midmarket is that we can bring them enterprise-class infrastructure services in an economical and scalable way,” says Hayward. “That brings a level of service they would never be able to provision on their own.”

Data Protection Required

Besides reducing the risk, cost and complexity of managing their IT infrastructure, CenterBeam's customers want long-term protection to ensure business continuity and regulatory compliance. Continued access to systems, and more importantly, the data that resides on those systems, is essential to keeping its customers in business. To address those concerns, the company needed to be able to provide optimized disaster recovery in a secure, safe and reliable way—particularly as backup and recovery evolve from tape and physical storage systems to digital and Web-based services.

“CenterBeam is not in the disaster recovery business,” Hayward says. “We're in disaster prevention. We spend a lot of time proactively managing desktops and servers so there is no major failure. When and if that happens, though, our entire focus is on a rapid return to productivity.”

BACK

STORING DATA

The ease and speed of recovery are one benefit of CenterBeam's services, but compliance is equally important. The company is particularly strong in the real estate, construction, engineering, professional services, health care, and nonprofit and social services markets. Many of these industries are heavily regulated, which not only demands constant access and continuity but also backup and the ability to recover systems for compliance purposes. In these environments, losing a disk, losing a system or losing any data can lead to disaster.

Backup Solutions Achieved

CenterBeam needed a flexible and efficient solution that provides a range of backup and restore services, can be delivered remotely and is flexible enough to be tailored into its service offerings. The answer was Iron Mountain Digital's Connected® for PC and LiveVault® services. Connected covers the desktop systems and laptops, while LiveVault provides a similar level of granular backup service for the server side. The flexibility and efficiency of both services fit into CenterBeam's model of disaster prevention, and help give its customers the data protection they need.

"They're tightly woven into our core set of infrastructure services," says Hayward. "There's no customer or prospect [to whom] we don't present both Connected and LiveVault."

Connected for Desktops and Laptops

Connected covers desktops and laptops with secure, automated backup and component-level recovery using its Delta Block® technology, which ensures only changes made to files are backed up, not the entire file. SendOnce® technology ensures that identical files residing on different machines are only backed up once. Both of those features increase speed and efficiency.

CenterBeam also uses Connected to centrally manage its distributed data backups. Connected helps reduce the amount of storage space needed by as much as 85 percent, and provides for automated backups, system roll-back following data loss and flexible backup scheduling. Through Connected, CenterBeam's customers can retrieve damaged or lost files without help-desk intervention.

"We've been using Connected since 1999," Hayward says. "It's an integral part of our service. It's an incredibly efficient desktop backup solution. Connected lets users perform backups from anywhere, and gives them flexible and efficient options to do so."

With automatic backup, Connected doesn't rely on user intervention, so desktop backup can be a corporate priority that happens seamlessly. Backups can also be done via the Internet; the data is encrypted for added security. Using Connected as part of its recovery services, CenterBeam can roll back a customer's system to the last known good state.

"There's no customer or prospect [to whom] we don't present both Connected and LiveVault." says Karen Hayward.



LiveVault for Servers

LiveVault provides similarly granular services at the server level, including fully automated backups, continuous backups to ensure against data loss and built-in protection for open files. The open file protection ensures that any file being used during an outage or other disaster can still be recovered. Like Connected, CenterBeam can manage its LiveVault storage services through a Web-based portal.

"The market for LiveVault is huge," Hayward says. While the size of the market is one factor, the state of the market is equally important; many companies rely on outdated backup technology.

"Most of the companies in this space—about 80,000 in the U.S.—are still using tape," she says. "The problem with tape is that many CFOs who have responsibility for IT don't even know where it's being stored. Tape often becomes corrupted, so much of the data is at serious risk. It's all very manual."

Hayward recalls a review for a potential client, a publicly traded company based in New Jersey, that was using a tape backup system. "The director of IT was keeping the tapes in the trunk of his car," she says. "And in New Jersey, it gets chilly in the winter and hot in the summer. The CFO was mortified when we told him that."

Blue Screen Tales of Terror

Not even Hayward could escape a case of the dreaded blue screen of death. While preparing a presentation in Washington, D.C., she fired up her laptop only to be greeted by that unsettling field of blue. A quick call to CenterBeam's help line confirmed her worst fears. "The guy said it was a complete and total hardware failure, and he'd have to give

me a new machine,” she says.

The enterprising service agent asked Hayward where she would be the following day, and he arranged for a new laptop to be sent to her hotel the very next day. Even better, the new laptop had all her files, folders, data, presentations and settings intact: they had been preserved because Hayward’s laptop was backed up with Connected.

“They performed a Connected restore to get all my data and all my settings—everything was there. And all of this was loaded on a new piece of hardware,” she says. “As a mobile worker, I found it an amazing experience—I didn’t skip a beat.

“The only thing you lose,” she says, “is what you didn’t back up since the last time. But I had a lot of documents on my desktop and they were all there.”

Connected also saved the day for Dan McDade, president of Atlanta-based marketing company PointClear, a CenterBeam customer. “Last week I got the dreaded blue screen,” McDade says. “I called CenterBeam and they took over. CenterBeam remotely restored my laptop to full functionality, including all of the files on my local hard drive, all within a day of receiving the case.”

To McDade, having backup services handled remotely was more expedient than if he had been helped directly in his office. “I made one phone call and CenterBeam handled the rest. My IT staff didn’t need to get involved, and with all they have on their plate, this certainly was completed a lot faster and more efficiently than it could have possibly been handled internally.”

The potential for lost and damaged data on laptops is a particularly pressing issue, especially since storage capacity continues to increase by orders of magnitude and laptops have become many mobile professionals’ primary system. “Think about what people carry around on their laptops,” Hayward says. “You don’t have to go much further than to say, ‘What would happen if we took your laptop away today?’”

Serving Up Storage

The market for Storage-as-a-Service is heating up as mid-market companies look for more efficient, economical and secure alternatives for backup and recovery. “When you look at the SMB and midmarket range, a lot of customers want to adopt this new technology,” says Bob LaLiberte, an analyst with the Milford, Mass.-based storage analyst Enterprise Strategy Group. “It’s expensive to bring it in-house. The ability to get this advanced service for a low, monthly, predictable rate takes the burden off the IT staff. They don’t have to worry about backups.”

He sees tape as still having a place in the world of backup and recovery, but the manner in which tapes are typically handled is problematic. “For smaller companies, backup to tape was their strategy,” he says. “Those get taken home in someone’s trunk. They don’t have control

over the media. Being able to leverage [Storage-as-a-Service] gets it to a remote site for geographic protection for your data.”

LaLiberte cites numerous benefits for midmarket companies using Storage-as-a-Service, including improved recovery times, the ability to back up individual files or incremental changes, the ability to perform quick restores via the Internet, and the ease and speed with which IT staffers can perform large-scale full restores.

“When people need to recover [data], it is often data less than a couple of days old that just got lost or deleted accidentally. They need it back immediately,” LaLiberte explains. “In those situations, online backup works extremely well.”

Using a flexible backup and recovery technology like Storage-as-a-Service can also fit well with a company’s regulatory requirements. While statutes like Sarbanes-Oxley and HIPAA typically have a greater impact on larger companies, LaLiberte is starting to see online backup companies offer archiving solutions suitable for the mid-market. “We’re seeing companies come out with different options,” he says.

The areas for growth within the Storage-as-a-Service market include eDiscovery, especially the ability to archive data, discover it and restore it quickly for eDiscovery purposes. “For the midmarket, it’s really about archiving and eDiscovery, rapid restores and quick starts. They’re trying to improve recovery time objectives,” says LaLiberte. “Those are the biggest opportunities we see for expansion.”

Value and Differentiation

As CenterBeam expands its market to more midsize companies, and with an increasing global presence, the services it provides with Connected and LiveVault will continue to be a core differentiator. CFOs in this sector continue to cope with constant technological change and increasing threats to security and business continuity. “They’re overwhelmed with increasing complexity of managing all aspects [of their infrastructure]. There’s more pressure around security, more pressure around email, more pressure around data security, more pressure around users expecting service 24/7,” Hayward says. “They have it coming at them from all aspects.”

CenterBeam also places a premium on process documentation. That way, what it has done for clients and the manner in which it was done is easily repeatable. “The whole notion of variable support in a repeatable, highly documented fashion is pretty compelling for the CFO,” Hayward says. “We go in and optimize the existing environment. We give them a lot more visibility into their environment than they would otherwise have.” ▲

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