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Greenwood County School District 52 Hits Back Hard on Ransomware

When Greenwood County School District 52 in South Carolina needed a more robust and reliable Backup and Disaster Recovery system, the district turned to Sharp. The move happened not a moment too soon. One month after signing on with Sharp, the district was hit with ransomware.

Business Environment Challenges

Greenwood County School District 52 (the district) is made up of four schools, spanning grades K – 12, serving the city of Ninety-Six, South Carolina. The district recognized that it lacked a robust and reliable Backup and Disaster Recovery system. Although they had a reliable IT consultant on staff, his services alone were not enough to monitor the district's servers 24/7.

Technology Solutions

The district enlisted the help of Sharp Business Systems in South Carolina to assess its current IT environment. Sharp determined that the district needed a reliable Backup and Disaster Recovery system as well as a Managed Network Services solution provided by Sharp Business Systems. The district was assigned a dedicated Virtual CIO (vCIO) to oversee the management of the school's IT operations and infrastructure. The overhaul also included around-the-clock server Remote Monitoring and Management as well as Backup and Disaster Recovery services.

Industry
Education

Organization
Greenwood County School District 52

Challenges
- Minimal IT staff to manage network issues as they take place
- Weak, unreliable backup solution

Solutions
- Installed server Remote Monitoring and Management services
- Implemented new Backup and Disaster Recovery system

Results
- Ongoing server monitoring and management provided by a dedicated Virtual CIO meant less downtime
- Able to recover all data within a matter of hours when hit with ransomware

Proven results

Approximately one month after Sharp's services were implemented, both Sharp's vCIO and the school's IT consultant received an alert from Sharp's Remote Monitoring and Management system that a new administrator account had been added to one of the district's servers. Soon thereafter, they received an alert indicating that the server's security logs had been cleared. Sharp's vCIO instantly suspected that something was amiss.

"Often, when a person hacks into a system, they try to cover their tracks by deleting the security logs on their way out," said Byron Trivett, Sharp vCIO.

Upon further inspection, it was obvious that someone had, in fact, hacked into the server and injected it with ransomware before attempting to cover their tracks. All of the server's critical data had been locked and encrypted.

Sharp sprang into action immediately. By the following afternoon, all of the files had been restored and the server was back up and running again. The data itself was critical to the school and without reliable Backup and Disaster Recovery services, it would have taken the district weeks to recover when, in fact, it only took a matter of hours. Additionally, Sharp's Remote Monitoring and Management service helped alert Sharp to the problem quickly so that there was hardly any downtime.

Sharp also helped secure the district's network even further after discovering that there was a large hole in their security infrastructure, which had allowed the hack to occur in the first place.

"We are confident that they'll be protected from such attacks on their system going forward," said Byron.

"Because they don't typically have as many resources as a larger organization, schools are often a target of ransomware," said Jennifer Madden, Director of Technology, Greenwood County School District 52. "We have been very pleased with the service that Sharp has provided so far. In addition to the ransomware incident, we were able to get ahead of failing hard drives and order replacements before we had any downtime, due to Sharp's Remote Monitoring and Management system."