The Problem with Tape Management

Backup Software Limitations

Backup applications such as NetBackup, TSM, Commvault, and others generally know:

what data is written to each tape; which tapes can be reused; retention information; and in some cases, where a tape is supposed to be.

However, backup software is not designed to provide comprehensive operational governance of physical media movement and handling.

Tape Library Limitations

Tape library hardware knows:

what tapes are physically inside the robot; and which slots currently contain media.

But the library itself does not necessarily know:

whether the correct tapes are present; whether a tape is missing; whether an incorrect tape has been inserted; or whether a tape has been removed without authorisation.

Offsite Vendor Limitations

Offsite vendors such as Iron Mountain and Restore provide operational tracking systems for transportation and vaulting.

These systems are designed primarily around the vendor’s own logistics and operational requirements rather than the customer’s governance and compliance needs.

As a result, organisations are often left relying on:

spreadsheets; manual reconciliation; operator knowledge; and ad-hoc processes.

This creates operational risk.

How TapeTrack Adds Value

TapeTrack integrates backup software, tape libraries, and offsite storage operations into a single

governance and operational control layer.

It bridges the gaps between systems and automates tasks that would otherwise be completely manual.

TapeTrack can:

detect when the wrong tape has been inserted into a robot; detect when an expected tape is missing from the robot; track tapes stored in external cabinets or overflow storage; generate and send requests to offsite vendors; reconcile vendor scan activity against expected movements; alert when tapes sent offsite were not scanned in by the vendor; monitor scratch tape availability; and warn when there are insufficient scratch tapes available to complete backup operations.

Operational Governance

TapeTrack provides organisations with stronger operational governance and audit capability around physical media.

This includes:

chain-of-custody visibility; reconciliation of physical versus expected inventory; automated operational alerts; reporting for audit and compliance purposes; and reduction of manual operational effort.

TapeTrack becomes the authoritative operational system for physical tape handling, movement, and reconciliation.

Example: Detecting Missing Tapes

One example of the type of issue TapeTrack can detect involves tape-library maintenance.

Imagine a tape-library engineer attends site to replace a faulty tape drive. The failed drive contains a tape that is stuck inside the mechanism. The engineer removes the drive and leaves site with the tape still inside it.

Without TapeTrack, the missing tape may go unnoticed for years.

The backup application may still believe the tape exists. The tape library may no longer report it because the drive has been removed. The offsite vendor may have no record of the tape at all.

TapeTrack can detect the discrepancy immediately by identifying that:

the tape is expected to exist; it is not present in the library; it has not been sent offsite; and no authorised movement was recorded.

This kind of operational visibility is critically important for governance and legal defensibility.

If the missing tape later becomes relevant during litigation, regulatory investigation, or audit activity,

organisations may otherwise face significant legal and compliance exposure while attempting to explain what happened to the media.

Summary

TapeTrack does not replace backup software, tape libraries, or offsite vendors.

Instead, it complements them by providing the operational governance, reconciliation, automation, and visibility that those systems typically lack.

For organisations that still rely on tape retention, TapeTrack helps reduce operational risk while improving compliance, accountability, and restore readiness.

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