

Columbia/Barnard Hillel at Columbia University

Making the Smart Data Protection Choice with Iron Mountain

CUSTOMER: Columbia/Barnard Hillel at Columbia University
BUSINESS: Foster the cultural, social, religious, and educational involvement of Columbia University's Jewish student population
CHALLENGE: Implement an automated, consistent data protection solution for the protection of business-critical data

In data protection, where security, accessibility, and immediacy reign supreme, Iron Mountain's Server Electronic Vaulting, powered by LiveVault®, is not just the smart choice. It's the only choice for guarding the crucial data assets of any security-conscious, data-driven organization.

Assessing the Data Protection Challenge

Columbia/Barnard Hillel, an organization aimed at fostering the cultural, social, religious, and educational involvement of the university's Jewish student population, first harnessed Iron Mountain's Server Electronic Vaulting in early fall 2002. Before deploying Electronic Vaulting, Columbia/Barnard Hillel employed a conventional data backup system that required in-house staff to suspend their primary duties to back up data to tape weekly and to personally transport that tape off site. These tapes were transported to their unprotected homes and in personal vehicles ill equipped to guard against the temperature and other environmental extremes so often proven detrimental to media-based data.

While Hillel's data backup system ported the organization's crucial data off site—thereby attempting to address one facet of sound data backup practice — it was not a consistent, robust data protection solution. Hillel's system lacked not just the expertise of a neutral, established outsourcer, it lacked such an outsourcer's resources: secure

off-site vaults, environmentally controlled vehicles, and other media-tailored resources that are accessible and available in the event of disaster. Further, Hillel's backup system strained the organization's resources and did not allow the organization to be truly accountable for its data: The Hillel staff member backing up the organization's crucial data was the same staff member trying to transport and warehouse that data.

"It was a horrendous system, just not feasible," said Jim Goins, Hillel's administrator. "[Our previous data backup system] opened a Pandora's box of disasters. We had to move away from that system, and we did."

Launching the Iron Mountain Solution

Because Goins had worked with Iron Mountain solutions while at other companies, he was well versed in the merits of Iron Mountain's Off-Site Data Protection services. To sidestep possible litigation, the Hillel's board had required Hillel to enlist a third-party outsourcer like Iron Mountain to assume their data protection and security responsibilities. Goins' staff researched other data protection options but found Iron Mountain's Off-Site Data Protection services "far superior" in the market.

"What caught my eye was Iron Mountain's ability to get data protected on a very fast turnaround, which was far
(continued on next page)

**"WITHOUT
THE DATA,
THERE IS NO
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superior to our [then] current practice,” Goins said. “The quality of protection was critical to choosing Iron Mountain. We went with the trusted brand.”

Columbia/Barnard Hillel, a nonprofit venture driven by the ability of business contacts to cultivate donations as well as other business contacts, harbors two main, mission-critical data sources:

1. A major database of program donors and
2. A corollary database of donors history and related information.

Together these sources house several GB of crucial data. To render its databases accurate and usable, Hillel imports and exports data to and from those databases continuously.

Proving Iron Mountain Protection Works

About 5 months into its partnership with Iron Mountain, and on the cusp of a long, holiday weekend, Hillel faced disaster: Abnormal code was inserted into, and disabled, the organization’s donor database. Without its critical data — the names and contact information of those funding its existence — and at a time when most businesses’ resources were rapidly becoming unavailable, Hillel faced a major disaster.

Fortunately, however, Iron Mountain’s Server Electronic Vaulting, a leading-edge service that electronically and automatically backs up and restores businesses’ crucial data, was guarding Hillel’s donor data. Because Goins had instituted Server Electronic Vaulting, Iron Mountain was able to recover all the data lost at the start of that holiday weekend — all data input up to 5 minutes before the potentially devastating code error. Restoring Hillel’s full donor database took Iron Mountain only 35 minutes.

“It was incredible,” Goins said. “[Iron Mountain] paid for [itself] right in that minute. [Server Electronic Vaulting] is something departments like this really need. It saves 20 to 30 times what it costs — immediately. Managers would have to be blind not to see that data protection like this is worth its weight in gold.”

According to Hillel’s accounting, Iron Mountain’s Server Electronic Vaulting saves the organization \$6,000 annually in staff time and other resources. Under the organization’s preceding backup system, Hillel staff spent a substantial amount of time trying to secure and transport the organization’s mission-critical data, often failing to do so properly or successfully despite expending the effort.

By assuming the burden of data backup and recovery, Iron Mountain’s Server Electronic Vaulting minimizes Hillel’s risk as it frees the organization’s resources. With Server Electronic Vaulting, data is continuously secured and protected from the time it leaves the server, a process that is seamless to the organization. Iron Mountain automatically and continuously backs up data online, vaulting that data off site in vaults that are always accessible and secure. Round-the-clock, expert Iron Mountain staff ensures that, when disasters like Hillel’s strike, current data is available whenever, and wherever, organizations like Hillel need it.

According to Goins, Iron Mountain’s greatest value hinges on its speed and quality protection, as well as on other, less tangible benefits. “The quality of [Iron Mountain’s] people was paramount,” Goins said. “But to be able to call back the correct data at the correct time is invaluable.”

