

AcenTek

Telco Adopts Cloud for Resilience and Cyber Insurance Requirement



Use Cases

Business Backup **VM Backup**
Disaster Recovery

Keywords

Cybersecurity Insurance **3-2-1** **Object Lock**
Veeam **VMware**

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Cyber
Insurance
Policy
Secured

Situation

Disaster recovery is a top concern for communications provider AcenTek. The company's data center team is responsible for backing up hundreds of terabytes of business-critical data flowing in from 300 virtual machines, production data, and a disaster recovery site. In order to satisfy cybersecurity insurance policy requirements, their backups needed to be off-site and geographically distant from their own data centers.

300

Virtual
Machines
Backed Up

Solution

The AcenTek team migrated to a 3-2-1 backup approach, choosing cloud storage for the off-site component. As a Veeam customer, the team was drawn to Backblaze B2 Cloud Storage due to its integration with Veeam. In addition, Backblaze offered a critical feature—immutability—as well as geographic distance from AcenTek's own data centers. Storage costs were significantly lower than Amazon and Microsoft, making it easy to secure executive support.

Result

With Backblaze B2, AcenTek has an additional layer of resilience for its backup data by storing it in a secure, immutable cloud storage platform. This enabled the company to satisfy a requirement for off-site backups mandated by its insurance carrier and secure their policy, which further protects the business. Backups run seamlessly through Veeam into Backblaze B2, ensuring smooth operations (and peace of mind) for the data center team.

1 hr

Set Up
Time



In 1950, a group of farmers in southeastern Minnesota banded together to bring telephone service to their rural community. As the years passed, the cooperative acquired other local providers and expanded its portfolio to offer voice, video, and internet services to residential, business, and institutional customers in the region. Today, AcenTek is a full-service communications provider serving tens of thousands of customers in southeastern Minnesota, northeastern Iowa, and Michigan.



When All Else Fails, AcenTek Can Rely on Backblaze B2

Data loss from cyberattacks, natural disasters, system failures, or other causes can have far-reaching consequences for any business and its customers. Such disasters can be especially hard in remote areas that may have less tech infrastructure to fall back upon if essential services like communications are disrupted. Midwestern-based telecom AcenTek's largely rural customer base depends on its ability to deliver uninterrupted communication services that support their business operations, livelihoods, safety, or everyday needs. Therefore, a top priority for the company is to protect and manage the business-critical data that passes through its servers every day.

Currently, a lean team of four data center specialists and their supervisor run all data operations for the company, including data storage and backup systems. The team manages hundreds of terabytes of data coming from 300 virtual machines that house corporate file servers, customer information systems, email platforms, ISP systems, and much more. To maintain business continuity in the face of data corruption or loss, they've implemented a robust disaster recovery infrastructure that now includes Backblaze B2.

“ Adding Backblaze to our infrastructure allowed us to satisfy our insurance carrier’s requirements. We could prove that we’re maintaining immutable backups on third-party servers located across the country that comply with industry standards for data security.

Chris Hoiland, IT/Data Center Supervisor, AcenTek

Phoning In a Better 3-2-1 Backup Approach

As a long-time VMware customer, the AcenTek team was using [Veeam](#), a VMware ecosystem partner and popular data protection software, for secure data backup operations. At one point, they reviewed their approach and determined that they could be doing more. “We were looking at ways to improve our backup strategy and become more resilient to attack,” said Chris Hoiland, AcenTek IT/Data Center Supervisor.

As part of their review process, Hoiland and team attended a webinar on data security hosted by Veeam that discussed best practices around data protection and recovery. The presenter’s recommendation was to adopt a more specific sort of 3-2-1 approach: three copies of data on two different types of media, with the off-site copy stored in a different geographic region, such as can be the case with cloud storage.

AcenTek’s existing storage scheme covered the 3-2-1 basics, but their off-site copy was no further away than their own data center. In the case of a large natural disaster, their one off-site copy could be vulnerable

to destruction, leaving them without a path to recovery. Additionally, their cybersecurity insurance provider required their off-site data copy to be stored by a third party in a distant location, rather than at AcenTek’s own facilities.

“We had multiple backups of our data, including spinning disks and physical tapes in our own data center facility. But we didn’t have an external storage solution,” said Brent Everson, IT/Data Center Systems Specialist at AcenTek. “We could have stored another set of tapes off-site, but our experience with tapes has not been great. So, we were leaning towards a cloud solution instead.”

Everson began looking for an object storage solution that would complement their existing set up on Veeam and provide an additional layer of resilience. He said, “If the worst happens, and everything’s gone, at least we’d still have that one last copy with a cloud storage provider.”

Calling Long Distance for Immutable Backups

In Everson's search for a [Veeam Ready](#) solution, Backblaze rose to the top of the list—the preexisting partnership between the two providers made integrating the two solutions a breeze.

More importantly, Backblaze met all of AcenTek's performance and security requirements with its enterprise-grade, S3 Compatible object storage. In particular, it satisfied their need for robust security during data transfer and storage. Backblaze's [server-side encryption](#) could protect data coming from Veeam before it hit storage, and Backblaze Object Lock provided immutability, which meant that no one could tamper with, modify, or remove data from their storage bucket.

Another important consideration was geography. Backblaze data centers are located far from AcenTek headquarters in Minnesota, so if a natural disaster hit their area, the cloud backup storage servers would not be impacted. Finally, storage costs on Backblaze were significantly lower than on Amazon S3 or Microsoft Azure. "I had to ask our executives to fund a new storage solution," said Hoiland. "And the fact that Backblaze was a high-quality solution that was not cost prohibitive made the sale to my boss pretty easy."

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Peace of Mind on the Line From Insurer to the Customer

Another factor driving AcenTek's need for cloud backup was a requirement for off-site data storage by their cybersecurity insurance company. AcenTek provides SLAs to its customers, and as such, their policy protects the business in the event of an incident. Previously, the carrier was threatening to drop their coverage because AcenTek wasn't storing backups off-site at a third-party facility. However, their new infrastructure has resolved this concern.

Hoiland said, "Adding Backblaze to our infrastructure allowed us to satisfy our insurance carrier's requirements. We could prove that we're maintaining immutable backups on third-party servers located across the country that comply with industry standards for data security."

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Brent Everson, IT/Data Center Systems Specialist, AcenTek



Making an Easy Call Easier

Once the decision was made, deploying Backblaze B2 was straightforward. Everson recalled, "Backblaze's deployment guide was easy, and I was able to get all of my questions answered on the website. Kudos to the team who put those resources together." It took about an hour to set up a Scale-Out Backup Repository in Veeam, connect Backblaze, and configure the buckets and settings. Everson then used the Veeam console to begin transferring data to Backblaze, and Object Lock to secure the storage bucket.

Along the way, the Backblaze account executive and solution engineer checked in with Everson regularly, and helped ease a few of the steps along the way to keep things moving smoothly with the integration. "I really appreciated the level of support," said Everson, "because a lot of vendors will say, 'It's the other vendor's problem, go work with them.' Our Backblaze reps made the effort to track down answers for us, so that we could have a successful deployment. If we had gone with Amazon or Microsoft, I don't think those reps would

have done stuff like that at the deployment stage." Currently, AcenTek is going beyond the 3-2-1 recommendation and maintaining four copies of data—a total of 450TB—on production, spinning disk, a disaster recovery site, and Backblaze B2. Data is backed up through Veeam to Backblaze on a weekly schedule, and the team looks forward to protecting more data sets in Backblaze B2 Cloud Storage.

The AcenTek team hopes to never have to touch their data on Backblaze B2. If a natural disaster or cyberattack ever happened, one of their multiple backups would likely save the day. But in that very worst-case scenario, when all else fails, they can rely on the copy stored with Backblaze. This ensures that the business is able to meet their SLA obligations to their customers and gives the IT team confidence that they can respond quickly and effectively. Hoiland sums it up: "We can sleep better at night knowing that we are now more resilient."

About Backblaze

The Backblaze B2 Storage Cloud is purpose-built for ease. It offers always-hot, S3 compatible object storage that supports your workflows via third-party software integrations, APIs, CLI, and web UI. And it's priced for easy affordability at rates a fraction of other cloud providers. Businesses in more than 175 countries use the platform to host content, build and run applications, manage media, back up and archive data, and protect and recover from ransomware.

www.backblaze.com