

# Fast comeback for long-term customer data

HP FSE software helps solve compliance dilemma with archiving service



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– Achim Issmer, Head of Production Services and Open System Recovery, COMback GmbH

#### **Business need:**

Worldwide, data retention standards get stricter and stricter each year. German law now requires organizations to keep data and make it available online for 10 years. However, as businesses and government agencies upgrade computing systems and retire legacy mainframes, they face a dilemma: how to provide compliant access to data that was on systems they no longer have. To help their customers meet this challenge, COMback needed to develop a reliable, easy to manage, and economical long-term archiving solution.

#### **Solution overview:**

COMback GmbH provides disaster-recovery and other information lifecycle management (ILM) services to government agencies and businesses in southwest Germany. When customers make major changes in IT infrastructure – such as moving from mainframe to open systems – they use COMback's long-term archiving service. This allows companies to archive their legacy data, make it available online to meet business needs, and help comply with data-retention law. COMback employs HP StorageWorks File System Extender (FSE) software to manage access to archived data, migrating data as needed from low-cost tape storage to faster disk

# COMback

storage for online access. Storage hardware from GRAU Data Storage, an HP alliance partner, provides the high-capacity, economical, tiered storage.

#### **Helping customer data make a comeback**

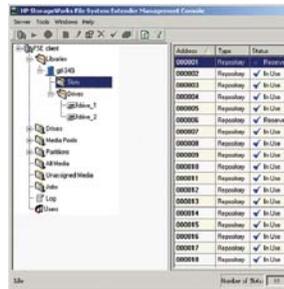
Founded in 1995, COMback GmbH is in the business of helping their customers protect critical information resources against various types of threats and, in the event of a disaster, restore information and IT infrastructures as quickly as possible. The pun built into COMback's name is no accident, confirms CEO Mark Doerbeck: "COMback's mission is to help our customers make sure they can come back from a disaster."

COMback provides both hot-site and cold-site disaster-recovery services for their customers, which are primarily state and local government agencies and businesses in a variety of industries. COMback also provides high-security data storage in their CITA (Center for Information Technology Affairs) data center – a comeback story itself. COMback houses the data center in a secure structure 30 meters underground – with walls three to five meters thick – originally built in the 1970s as a shelter from nuclear attack.

#### **A new business opportunity comes up**

Over the past several years, COMback's customers have encountered a new data-storage challenge as German law regarding data retention has evolved, much as it has worldwide. Under laws including section 147 of the German federal tax law and section 257 of the German commercial code, German businesses and corporations must retain data for 10 years. However, as organizations upgrade IT infrastructures, change operating systems, or move from a mainframe environment to open systems, they face the problem of providing access to data that was on systems no longer in use.





In some cases, organizations migrate data to the new environment, but often they have no business reason to do that. Companies usually see maintaining legacy systems simply to provide access to archived data as a poor investment in equipment and people. For COMback, however, this need provides an opportunity to offer its customers a valuable new service: long-term archiving.

According to Achim Issmer, COMback's Head of Production Services and Open System Recovery, "Even if they change systems, our customers still need access to legacy data. Long-term archiving using the HP FSE software and GRAU hardware provides affordable and easy access, which helps our customers comply with government regulations and meet business needs."

#### Archiving process commences with "freezing"

When a customer company determines that they need long-term archiving, the COMback team initiates the process by going to the customer site and "freezing" the system – including the operating system, applications, and data. Explains Issmer, "If the customer brought the data to us on tape, we can never be sure we have everything we need to bring the data back online if necessary. So, it is always better to go there and do it ourselves."

The team returns to the COMback data center with the customer data on tape. They then load the data onto the GRAU Data Storage INFINISTORE Virtual Disk (IVD) 340, which includes – in a single enclosure – a disk array with 1 TB of cache capacity and a tape library with 6 Sony AIT2 drives and 340 media slots. The HP StorageWorks File System Extender (FSE) software, designed to manage the movement of data easily between storage media, runs under the Linux operating system on a dedicated processor integrated into the IVD. FSE is part of HP's Information Lifecycle Management strategy, which enables customers to capture, store, and retrieve information to help meet long-term goals.

#### Data comes back when called

COMback customers need access to their archived data for a number of reasons, including government tax audits, due diligence in merger and acquisition situations, disclosure in legal cases, and historical information to support management decisions.

The system stores archived data on economical tape media. When a customer needs to access their legacy data, COMback uses the FSE software to migrate the archived data from tape to disk on the IVD 340 for faster access, and then brings the data back online in an environment emulating the customer's previous environment. The customer can then access the data, typically over the Internet.

COMback maintains a range of legacy environments, sharing the cost across multiple customers. COMback hosts the legacy environments on Intel-based servers, including an HP ProLiant DL560 server. These servers incorporate a variety of emulation tools, such as an IBM/390 emulation chip set.

#### Comparing solutions and choosing HP

COMback installed the HP StorageWorks FSE software and the GRAU IVD storage system after extensive research into available archiving solutions. They also determined that the cost of the system would allow them to offer the long-term archiving service at a price that would attract customers and afford a profit. Most importantly, COMback determined that the system would work.

"We tested it under a variety of possible situations, and we found that the HP FSE/GRAU combination would allow us to efficiently and easily migrate data back and forth between disk and tape," recalls Issmer. "Since then, FSE has helped COMback steadily expand the long-term archiving service, building it into an important component of its business."

**FSE is the key to successful returns and future growth**  
Because COMback is a small company, with only 25 employees, it must use personnel resources carefully. That's why, from COMback's perspective, the single most important attribute of FSE software is ease of use.

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"HP FSE software is the key to letting us offer our customers economical long-term archiving service," emphasizes Issmer. "It's easy to use and requires very little staff time. You don't need a lot of knowledge or a great depth of knowledge to use it. It is designed so that we configure it one time and it functions automatically. The FSE software allows us to operate this part of the business very economically – we added long-term archiving service to our service offering without adding staff. It is also very reliable and works well with the GRAU IVD hardware."

Future deployments for the long-term archiving system at COMback include the possible addition of a second IVD to enable replication of data – either within the COMback data center or at a more distant location. Concludes Issmer, "Over the next year, we plan to add as many as seven new HP N-series servers, two HP StorageWorks disk arrays, and a StorageWorks Enterprise Virtual Array (EVA) to support our disaster-recovery business. HP solutions are highly reliable, affordable, and easy to use, so we will continue to come back to HP for our technology needs."

#### **About COMback GmbH**

From its headquarters in Germany's Black Forest region, COMback GmbH provides hosting and information protection services, including long-term archiving, hot-site and cold-site disaster-recovery facilities, Internet-based backup, and data security consulting and planning. Founded in 1995, COMback ([www.comback.de](http://www.comback.de)) has built its business around its skilled professional staff and its unique high-security data center in a former atomic shelter.



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## At a glance

### Hardware:

- GRAU Data Storage INFINISTORE Virtual Disk IVD 340 with 1 TB of cache capacity and a tape library with six Sony AIT2 drives and 340 media slots
- HP ProLiant DL560 server

### Software:

- HP StorageWorks File System Extender (FSE) storage-management software
- Linux SUSE Enterprise

## Challenges

- Store customer legacy data for 10 years, including data on systems customers no longer maintain
- Provide online access to stored data on demand
- Manage archived data economically

## Solution

- Utilize GRAU Data Storage INFINISTORE Virtual Disk (IVD) 340 for high-capacity, economical tiered archival storage
- Implement HP StorageWorks File System Extender (FSE) software to manage migration of data between disk and tape
- Maintain multiple legacy platforms so that customers can access legacy data

## Results

- COMback developed a new business providing long-term archiving services.
- Customers are able to comply with information retention laws after major infrastructure changes – without having to maintain legacy systems.
- COMback manages long-term archiving service without additional staff.
- Multiple customers share costs of maintaining legacy platforms.

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