

City of Everett secures Office 365 data and makes eDiscovery 3x faster

After transitioning to Office 365 and migrating backup copies to Microsoft Azure, city officials increased efficiency and compliance with Commvault Activate™



Challenge

- eDiscovery was cumbersome and required third-party tools
- Freedom of Information requests burdened IT staff
- Transitioning to Microsoft Office 365 and needed data protection that met established service levels while preserving email archive user experience
- Changing technologies resulted in staff burnout and “change fatigue”
- 4,000+ PST files located off-site across several city departments made discovery difficult

Solution

- Re-architected Commvault Complete™ Backup & Recovery infrastructure to take advantage of the latest features
- Added Commvault Activate to secure sensitive data files and enhance eDiscovery
- Created easily accessed tertiary back-up site in the Azure environment
- Worked with Commvault Services to ensure continuity in user experience

Result

- 3-4x times faster compliance with information requests
- Sensitive Data Governance tools allowed city to be proactive in protecting data containing private information
- Search workloads transferred out of IT to department compliance officers, freeing IT staff time
- Shifted long term retention backup copies to Microsoft Azure to improve disaster recovery capabilities and lower costs
- Archived PST files and mailboxes indexed to be more discoverable
- Microsoft 365 adopted with continuity in user experience and added efficiencies

Industry

Municipal government

Location

Everett, Washington, U.S.

URL

everettwa.gov

At a glance

- Full-service municipal government including general government services (HR, IT, legal, finance) plus police, fire, library, public works, senior center, animal shelter, park system, transit system, water utility
- 111,600 residents

Key assets protected

- Microsoft Office 365 email and SharePoint online
- Microsoft Azure compute and SQL managed instances
- Archived PST content
- Critical file services for departments such as Police, Fire, and other key city services.
- SQL, Oracle

The backup environment

- Commvault Complete Backup & Recovery
- Commvault Activate



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Kevin Walser IT project manager | City of Everett

Many needs, one solution

The City of Everett, Washington, is a full-service municipality. Unlike many cities that cost-share or draw from regional service providers, the Everett is a stand-alone entity, responsible for providing not just general government support functions like legal services, HR, finance and IT, but also firefighting, a police department with its own forensics lab, a regional water utility, a public works department for streets and traffic engineering, a parks system, a senior center, an animal shelter, a library with two branches, and a transit system. Its data needs are varied.

For many years, the Everett backed up data on tape and shipped copies to a disaster recovery site located nearby in south Everett. When, in 2012, the Everett decided to adopt Microsoft Azure as its key cloud environment, it turned to Commvault Complete Backup & Recovery to protect data across the heterogenous systems the city had implemented over the years.

“We were just getting into SharePoint, expanding our SQL servers, trying to figure out a better way to back up Oracle. We were looking for a solution that did everything and did it well,” said Kevin Walser, IT project manager for the Everett. “We looked at a few different systems, but Commvault stood out as a single platform solution.”

“Microsoft Teams has become an invaluable tool for us through this pandemic. One of the things we have in motion right now is upgrading our Commvault backup agent, because the newer agent allows us to do eDiscovery with our Teams records. Like many organizations now, I imagine we’re going to have more records in Teams than we’ll have in email.”

Steven Hellyer Director of Information Technology | City of Everett

Later, Everett decided to transition from running Microsoft Exchange on-premises to using [Office 365](#). Although the city had bought Commvault archiving licenses in the past, it had yet to implement the email archiving system. In addition, the city’s eDiscovery needs were significant; the volume of Freedom of Information requests alone burdened the IT staff.

To accelerate the transition to Office 365, the Everett needed to reduce the size of its mailboxes and eliminate PST files, which it achieved through Commvault archiving capabilities. Prior to Commvault, the city had approximately 4,000 PST files scattered offline throughout city computers. Compliance officers had to rely on IT staff for eDiscovery tasks, which entailed manual searches and required other departments that kept PST files to surface those for discovery.

One easily searchable index solves many problems

When Everett first implemented Commvault, it did not have the opportunity to take advantage of all the features available. As part of the plan to enhance its IT services, the city decided to re-implement its Commvault Complete infrastructure and to add Commvault Activate to optimize eDiscovery. “What I really wanted from our re-implementation was one eDiscovery index to rule them all. I really wanted to be able to index our backups and our archives and easily be able to run in one search across the enterprise,” said Steven Hellyer, director of information technology for the City of Everett.

Commvault Activate made it possible for clerks and compliance officers from various city departments and agencies to run discovery searches and find records, then share the appropriate information with the key staff who are responsible for reacting to requests.

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Kevin Walser IT project manager | City of Everett

“We have strong transparency laws in Washington state, and we wanted to provide information reliably and quickly when people put in requests,” said Walser. “We wanted a folder structure which users could then self-govern what documents should be kept and where. Luckily, Commvault had a good system for archiving for compliance.”

Commvault Activate allowed city officials to transfer search tasks away from IT and move the work to where it belongs in the enterprise. Hellyer estimates searches are now three to four times faster.

“It’s upping our game and really using the resources in the best way possible,” said Hellyer. “It was a huge win for us.”

Continuity in user experience

City IT officials were sensitive to preserving user experience during and after the transition. “We try to cut down on change fatigue, so we really try to cut down on the amount of technology we implement and we’re sensitive to its impact to users,” Walser said. “When we transitioned to Office 365, we worked with Commvault and we were able to get Office 365 backup agents and archiving agents configured, so when that happened the user experience from an archiving and compliance perspective stayed the same, which was huge.”

City officials also cited the Sensitive Data Governance capabilities of Commvault Activate as wins for the city. With its data already housed in the Commvault system, Everett officials are able to run Commvault Activate analytics against the indexed data to identify sensitive information and proactively reach out to city departments if they feel that data is at risk.

“As workers increasingly work from mobile devices and collaborate from remote locations, the ability of Commvault Activate to discover documents from, say, Microsoft Teams meetings will prove vital to future endeavors,” Hellyer said.

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Your complete Office 365 data protection solution. [Learn >](#)