

# The Almac Group

Data Protector creates consistent infrastructure design to streamline backup strategy and maintain full regulatory compliance

## Overview

The Almac Group (Almac) is an established contract development and manufacturing organization providing an extensive range of integrated services across the drug development lifecycle to the pharmaceutical and biotech sectors globally. Services range from R&D, biomarker discovery development and commercialization, API manufacture, formulation development, clinical trial supply, IRT (IVRS/IWRS), through to commercial-scale manufacture. The international company is a privately-owned organization which has grown organically over the past five decades now employing over 5,000 highly skilled personnel

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### DARREN O'NEILL

Infrastructure Systems Engineer  
Almac Group

across 17 facilities including Europe, the US and Asia.

## Challenge

As part of the pharmaceutical industry, Almac operates in a highly regulated environment, with very strict IT and data backup requirements. With its global headquarters based in Northern Ireland, five additional remote sites are located across the rest of the UK and Ireland. Initially each site accessed production data directly from the HQ facility and, as a result, no long term retention backup plan was required.

However, as a result of continued expansion, the sites experienced significant growth and several challenges emerged, as Darren O'Neill, Infrastructure Systems Engineer for Almac, explains: “The remote sites began generating their own production data, but we didn't have a local tape infrastructure for long term backup retention. At our HQ we use Micro Focus® Data Protector as our enterprise backup solution, however at our remote sites we opted for a VM backup solution for periodic data replication back to the HQ. Continuing with this strategy at the remote sites, but complying with our production data backup requirements, would need a local tape solution alongside maintenance and support. With our environment growing more diverse using multiple databases, the licensing structure with our previous solution



## At a Glance

- **Industry**  
Healthcare and Medical
- **Location**  
United Kingdom
- **Challenge**  
Consolidate backup approach across six different sites, to ensure high availability, disaster recovery, and full regulation compliance
- **Products and Services**  
Micro Focus Data Protector
- **Results**
  - + 50% faster backup completion with 2x higher data volume
  - + Capital cost savings due to minimal infrastructure footprint
  - + Full disaster recovery capability across all sites
  - + Simplified management with centralized and standardized model

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had integration limitations and did not offer the seamless link with HPE StoreOnce which Data Protector included.”

The company and data growth also meant an overall rethink in backup strategies. It took 65 hours to run a full backup of 50TB to two data centers to ensure high availability and disaster recovery. This was performed every weekend and would often cause various challenges for O'Neill, especially in the case of drive or tape issues. Almac looked for a solution to streamline its HQ backup and bring its remote sites in line with long term data retention policies.

### Solution

Local tape solutions involved additional capital costs and the need for local IT staff. Change control processes are already quite involved at Almac, prompting the desire for a standardized and centralized solution, as O'Neill comments: “We decided to consolidate our backup strategy to Data Protector. This ensures a standard, consistent approach for all sites, leveraging the existing infrastructure, thereby keeping capital costs low. It also provides central disaster recovery (DR) and reporting capabilities which is a significant benefit to us.”

Implementing Data Protector at the remote sites ensures StoreOnce Catalyst replication back to HQ and central GUI-based management of all remote backups. The Data Protector StoreOnce Catalyst replication approach is the most secure option, as it will guarantee completion, even when it encounters low bandwidth. Previous remote backups, using copy replication, had the potential to time out without completing.

A capacity-based licensing model is adaptable to company growth and additional remote sites. O'Neill explains why this model works well for Almac: “Capacity-based licensing for Data Protector gives us unlimited integration. We already have almost 60 different integration points and this is growing all the time. Data Protector's seamless integration with different databases is hugely beneficial. The centralized license administration portal is user friendly and the model is scalable and predictable enabling us to budget for growth.”

Combining Data Protector with StoreOnce as the main target repository for all backups has dramatically improved the backup time. Even though data volumes have doubled to over 110TB, a full duplicated backup now takes just 35 hours because of the concurrent streaming of backup activities.

### Results

In addition to halving backup times, O'Neill can see many other benefits: “A consolidated deployment method for any new remote backup environment has made my job much smoother. We have minimized our overall infrastructure footprint and still are able to offer full DR capabilities to our remote sites. We save on associated costs of additional tapes and no longer have the requirement to continuously validate and document change control processes. Our backup success rate has drastically improved and the centralized administration makes it much easier to operate and restore backups.”

He concludes: “In a 24/7 operation like Almac, with many live production systems, it is vital that we streamline and secure our backup processes. We have successfully achieved the transition to Data Protector while meeting all regulatory and compliance requirements. I feel confident that we can meet planned future company growth with the Data Protector-driven backup infrastructure we have implemented.”