ROBO backup: Key considerations

With more than a handful of remote-office/branch-office (ROBO) backup approaches, analyzing the key aspects of each alternative is essential to determining the best ROBO backup option.

Analysis of the backup data. The amount of data, change rate, and its value and criticality to the business are instrumental in devising a backup strategy. The larger the amount of data to be protected and the quicker data changes, the more important it is to retain a local copy of the data in the ROBO.

Backup window and restore times. The backup window is relevant for network-based backups to a central data center or the cloud. The impact on the network and other applications while backups are in progress must be clearly understood. Analysis of the network and available bandwidth is also important. Restore times and scenarios must be defined and in line with agreed recovery time objectives (RTOs) and service-level agreements (SLAs).

IT staff. The availability of IT resources at the remote site and overall IT staffing plays an important role in determining the right approach. In places with scarce IT resources, a cloud backup service should be considered.

Backup infrastructure. In firms with standardized backup infrastructures and established processes, centralizing ROBO backup is probably the right approach. In heterogeneous backup environments, backup target appliances from the likes of Data Domain and cloud backup gateways should be considered. Backup infrastructure features, such as remote management, deduplication, scheduling options and encryption, need to be reviewed. These features are critical for both centralized and cloud-based ROBO backups.

Compliance and regulations. Local regulatory and compliance requirements must be taken into consideration. This is especially relevant if cloud backup is considered. For public companies or industries subject to regulatory requirements, a service provider's compliance with SSAE16/SOC 1 (formerly known as SAS 70) is critical. If centralized backup is considered, determine privacy requirements by the country in which the ROBO is located.

Cost. As a rule of thumb, centralized backup that's able to leverage existing backup infrastructure is usually the least expensive option.