



Databarracks' case study

# DATA BARRACKS PROTECTS REMOTE BUSINESS WITH LOW BANDWIDTH BAAS

About Playdale Playgrounds

Playdale Playgrounds manufactures, supplies and installs outdoor play equipment across the UK, as well as exporting to over 14 countries globally.

Playdale's owners, the Croasdale family, started out in the logging industry in 1735. In 1978, the ninth generation of Croasdales refocused their trade to the design, manufacture and installation of playground equipment for schools, local authorities, leisure operators and more. Since then, they have grown to approximately 140 staff, 90 of whom are IT users, split between 20 mobile workers and 70 desk-based roles in their central office in Cumbria.

## The Challenge

Playdale employs a remote sales team, dispersed around the country for maximum customer reach. However, their head office is based at a remote location in the Lake District, so much of their correspondence with the team (and customers) takes place over email. As such, the availability of fast and reliable internet connectivity has been one of the company's most significant IT challenges over the years.

This is compounded by the fact that Playdale wins the majority of new business on the strength of its customer presentations. Historically, presentation materials (such as product designs and site plans) were hand-drawn by illustrators, negating any significant investment in technology. However, as the industry moved towards computer-aided design (CAD), IT manager Phil Rhoney knew the company had to start leveraging more technology in its design processes.

"When I joined Playdale I inherited an aging desktop estate of about forty 386 and 486 desktops running Windows 98. This suited the illustrators fine at the time, but I knew 3D design and video was going to become essential to win new business, and I needed to enable that with our technology strategy.

"Today, the presentations contain rich 2D and 3D playground designs, and photo realistic walkthrough videos with high-end shadow and lighting effects. In short, that means they're larger files. Moreover, our designs are unique to every individual project – we very rarely recycle assets, so we experience a lot of data churn. Managing the data lifecycle – from creation to archiving – is essential."

In parallel with the challenge of richer (and therefore larger) media assets, Playdale has had to contend with the limited availability of high-speed internet at Playdale's rural head office.

"Before we got broadband in 2004 we were using a 256k ISDN dial-up connection. Even when we got our first leased line, our upload speed was throttled to 256k, so our overnight backups were taking hours. We needed a backup solution that would protect our Exchange data as economically as possible – both in terms of network traffic and backup windows."

**“Managing the data lifecycle – from creation to archiving – is essential.”**



## The Solution

Playdale's legacy backup solution was an onsite appliance that struggled to properly backup Exchange data, regularly either backing up the data store in one big block or gathering Outlook's local.PST files into one place and writing them to tape.

After securing a fast and reliable (if costly) internet connection, Phil required an alternative backup solution that didn't depend on high levels of connectivity to provide an effective service. That's when Databarracks got in touch.

“Databarracks Backup as a Service is the only cloud service we have adopted so far. We're now on a 20MB leased line, which gives us the performance we need, but it's quite pricy because of our location. As such, we have to prioritise the bandwidth available to us. This means we have a dual approach to backups, using online backup for our most critical data and a weekly tape backup for our high-volume data.

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“The data lifecycle is quite fast at Playdale, so incremental backups are the ideal solution for us, particularly given our connectivity. We’ve secured a steady upload speed which means that backing up 30-40GB overnight is now a question of minutes, instead of hours. Compared to our weekly tape backup, which takes about 7-8 hours for 1.6TBs, it’s incredibly efficient.”

### The Benefits

A more reliable and cost-effective backup solution has enabled Playdale to distribute their presentation content to a broader range of customers – both via their mobile sales team and through email. In fact, Playdale’s reach has increased so significantly they are now looking to export domestically manufactured playground equipment to international clients.

“I haven’t had to think about our Exchange backups since we started using Databarracks, so I’ve been able to devote my attention to other projects. The solution is very reliable, but what I’m really paying for is the time to focus on activities that develop the business. The support team take care of pretty much everything – I’ll often receive an automated email, followed up by a phone call, informing me that a backup fault has been resolved before I’m even aware of it at our end.”

Peripherally, Backup as a Service (BaaS) has enabled Playdale to modernise processes that were a hangover from older systems.

“We used to send out presentation content on A1 and A2 printed paper, which was very costly. Having a backup solution that consumes bandwidth economically leaves us room to email large quantities of media more freely between our head office, remote workers and customer sites, thereby saving on considerable postage costs.”

Perhaps most crucially, Backup as a Service from Databarracks has enabled Playdale to overcome the connectivity limitations faced by its remote sales team without compromising the level of service they receive.

“The continuous improvement of our presentation materials is what’s going to differentiate us when pitching to customers. We have to sell the experience of the playground to both the adult decision makers and, sometimes, the children who will use it. Backup as a service makes it easier and cheaper to store, manage and protect the assets which drive our business forward.”