

Transform the datacenter

Customer Solution Case Study



Customer: Generali US Branch

Website: www.generaliusa.com

Customer Size: 60 employees

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Financial services—Insurance

Partner: eMazzanti Technologies

Website: www.emazzanti.net

Customer Profile

Generali US Branch provides property and casualty insurance for multinational corporations. It is the US office of Assicurazioni Generali, S.p.A., a global financial services leader.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Azure
 - Microsoft Azure Site Recovery
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Windows Server 2012 R2
- Technologies
 - Hyper-V

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Insurance company prepares for the worst with full disaster protection in the cloud

"By using Azure Site Recovery, we are there for our customers when they need us most. If disaster strikes, instead of our business being disabled for three to five days, we can be running again in minutes."

Mauricio Caneda, Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer, Generali US Branch

Prompted by weather extremes and other environmental uncertainties, Generali US Branch wanted better disaster protection for its business. With help from local IT partner eMazzanti Technologies, the insurance provider is using Microsoft Azure Site Recovery to replicate its virtual servers and data to the cloud. By selecting Azure Site Recovery, Generali US Branch eliminates disaster-caused interruption, reduces disaster recovery (DR) costs by 65 percent, and can easily test its DR setup to ensure operation.

As a provider of insurance and financial services to multinational organizations, Generali US Branch takes great pains to keep customer data safe. Until about 15 years ago, it did this by making nightly backups of all servers and sending the backup tapes offsite.

However, after the attacks of September 11, 2001, New York City-based Generali US Branch knew that it needed far stronger disaster protection than mere backup tapes. Generali US Branch is the US representative office of Assicurazioni Generali, S.p.A., a global leader in insurance and financial services headquartered in Trieste, Italy, with offices in 68 countries and 65 million customers. Generali US Branch provides a wide range

of insurance products and services and works closely with other Assicurazioni Generali companies and their multinational customers.

Set up DR site across the country

The September 11 attacks happened just blocks away from Generali US Branch. Afterward, the company set up a rack of servers in the datacenter of a sister company in Kansas City, Missouri. In the event of a disaster that affected the entire New York City area, Generali US Branch could restore operations by shipping the most recent backup tapes to the Missouri site and running applications from there. This would take about a week, but at least Generali US Branch would be able to recover.

In 2013, Assicurazioni Generali sold the Kansas City company, leaving Generali US Branch without a disaster recovery (DR) location. “We needed to get another DR site in place as soon as possible,” says Mauricio Caneda, Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer at Generali US Branch. “Not only does the New York Insurance Department require that we have a DR site and plan in place, but the increasingly severe weather in our area demands that every New York City company have a business continuity plan in place.”

Choose cloud services to protect the business

Caneda turned to eMazzanti Technologies, its longtime IT advisor and member of the Microsoft Partner Network, for counsel. eMazzanti had already helped Generali US Branch realize multiple operational efficiencies through the use of Microsoft technology.

Generali US Branch had replaced its VMware-based virtualization environment with the Hyper-V technology in the Windows Server 2012 R2 operating system to reduce costs. It had adopted Microsoft Office 365 to gain cloud-based access to modern communications and collaboration tools such as Microsoft Office, document sharing, file storage, videoconferencing, and instant messaging. And it had migrated an important line-of-business application to Microsoft Azure, a cloud environment where organizations can create, run, and manage their applications from Microsoft datacenters, all with eMazzanti Technologies consulting services.

“We encourage our customers to standardize on Microsoft software and cloud services wherever possible because this lets them tap into a rapidly expanding portfolio of Microsoft innovation,” says Carl Mazzanti, Chief Executive Officer of eMazzanti Technologies.

Just when Generali US Branch was looking for a new DR site, eMazzanti was testing a

recently released DR solution from Microsoft called Microsoft Azure Site Recovery (ASR). ASR is a cloud-based DR orchestration service that coordinates the replication and recovery of virtual machines across sites. Organizations can use Azure, their own datacenter, or a service provider datacenter as the recovery site.

eMazzanti offered Generali US Branch a DR-as-a-service (DRaaS) offering built on ASR. eMazzanti created a DR infrastructure for the company in Azure, which is being continuously synchronized with the company’s production workloads running in the Generali US Branch datacenter. Using a management console in Azure, eMazzanti monitors the company’s production workloads around the clock and, in the event of a looming disaster, switches the production workloads to Azure, where they can run indefinitely. eMazzanti uses this console to monitor and manage the workloads of all customers that use its DRaaS solution.

“I wanted to avoid going through this DR exercise every few years because of issues outside of our control,” Caneda says. “We felt that ASR made sense because it works best with Microsoft workloads, ASR was easy to use, we wouldn’t have to invest in DR hardware, and we already had one of our main systems running in Azure with good results.”

Serve customers without interruption

With ASR, Generali US Branch has far better protection for its applications and data than it did previously. “We’re pushing to expand our business, and further growth just wouldn’t be smart to do without a solid DR solution like this,” Caneda says. “By using Azure Site Recovery, we are there for our customers when they need us most. If disaster strikes, instead of our business being disabled for three to five days, we can be running again in minutes, with maximum data loss of less than 30 seconds.”

Reduce DR costs by 65 percent

ASR makes disaster recovery affordable for small and midsize businesses that can’t afford to set up duplicate server or datacenter environments that may never be used. With the eMazzanti DRaaS solution built on ASR, organizations use Azure datacenters as their DR datacenters and pay a flat fee per virtual machine and use inexpensive cloud storage. If an organization needs to shift its production workloads to Azure, it pays for the additional computing capacity only for the length of time that these workloads are running in Azure. “We reduced our DR costs by about 65 percent by moving to the eMazzanti Technologies DRaaS built on Azure Site Recovery,” Caneda says.

Simplify DR plan testing

Generali US Branch also benefits from greatly simplified DR plan testing, which the New York Insurance Department and corporate policies require. “In the past, we found it very difficult to do a complete test of our entire environment,” Caneda says. “We could test individual systems one at a time, but we never tested full failover like we experienced during September 11 and Superstorm Sandy as easily as we can now with the eMazzanti solution. With the eMazzanti DRaaS built on ASR, we intend to fully test our DR setup often. This delivers immense peace of mind that we will be ready when the next disaster hits.”