



"During our simulated disaster, we lost less than 30 seconds worth of work effort, with no data corruption or any other issue."

Nick Watts, National IT Manager, Alphawest Limited

Business Profile

Company Name:
Alphawest Services

Headquarters:
Sydney, Australia

Industry:
Information and Communication
Technology

Founded:
1986

Business Environment:

- Listed on the Australian Stock Exchange (ASX code: ALW).
- More than 750 employees
- 11 locations throughout Australia and Asia

Vision Solutions Product:
Double-Take Availability
Double-Take RecoverNow

Implementation Team:
Alphawest Services Internal IT and
Business Continuity Asia Pacific

Critical issue

Ensuring the availability of information management resources in physical and virtual environments.

Results

- Operations can continue on physical, virtual and cloud environments even when an outage occurs.
- Eliminates data loss and facilitates recovery in minutes.
- HA solution scales with virtualisation and cloud requirements.
- Permits testing without accessing the production computing environment.
- Enables frequent failover testing to ensure that their recovery strategy will work as planned.

Technologies

- Double-Take Availability
- Double-Take RecoverNow
- VMware's vSphere
- NetApp network storage
- Microsoft Windows Server
- Optus Evolve QoS-enabled IP VPN network
- Optus Elevate Cloud

Business Challenge

Alphawest is a leading ICT Services Provider that draws on over 20 years of ICT experience to help government and commercial organisations find a scalable ICT solution to meet today's business requirements and those in the future.

Like all successful organisations, Alphawest relies on several critical internal systems for its day-to-day operation. Alphawest had already embarked on the journey into virtualisation with the implementation of an internal private cloud, based on VMware's vSphere platform, and NetApp storage. However a single centralised and consolidated data processing resource could not protect against a site-wide outage or natural disaster. It was evident that secondary computing resources were needed to protect critical systems from disaster.

In addition to centralised tier 1 systems, like many national organisations Alphawest has several remote branch office servers that must be managed, maintained and backed up by the Internal IT team. An extended outage to any of the centralised critical systems, or any of the individual branch servers, would cause significant disruption to operations.



Solution

Alphawest turned to its parent company, Optus. More particularly, Alphawest turned to the Optus Evolve Network and the Optus Elevate Cloud.

Alphawest already relied on the Optus Evolve network for its wide area network, interconnecting all its sites across Australia on a secure and QoS-enabled IP VPN network. To greatly improve its chances of successfully recovering from a primary server failure, Alphawest subscribed to Optus Elevate, a cloud offering that delivers secure and reliable secondary data processing resources that plug in to the Evolve network. Alphawest also turned to its local partner Business Continuity and their Double-Take Availability offering from Vision Solutions, Inc. According to Nick Watts, Alphawest's National IT Manager, "It was as if Double-Take Availability was built for the cloud. The product itself just worked, first time. Within days we were replicating several key servers into the Elevate cloud."

Double-Take Availability also includes the ability to perform disaster-recovery failover testing, the ease of which is something that is often overlooked when evaluating replication tools. "It's all very well to see data moving from one site to another, but what you really need to know is that it will all work when you really need it," says Watts. "Double-Take Availability made failover testing a fairly elementary and routine procedure."

In fact, technicians completed a full simulated loss of their datacenter, failed over, tested, and failed it all back to production in about three hours. The RPO (recovery point objectives) and RTO (recovery time objectives) metrics from this test were much better than expected because Double-Take's replication to the cloud is continuous, and the Evolve bandwidth guaranteed.

Alphawest's IT disaster recovery plan for some key systems has also become far simpler and easier to execute. In a couple of cases, it's down from 40 pages, to about 5 pages long. This fact represents a big advantage when technicians are responding to a disaster, and the pressure is on.

The remote branch office backup issue was resolved by utilising Double-Take RecoverNow. RecoverNow replaces traditional backup systems by offering continuous, real-time, byte-level backups to a central Repository Server. "Backup windows" have been eliminated, as has the need for branch office tape management. Branch office servers can be restored at the primary datacenter as virtual machines, or can be restored to new hardware with very little effort.

The success of the Optus Elevate cloud with Alphawest's disaster recovery strategy that relies on Double-Take Availability as a core component has created much enthusiasm to further extend the use of these systems. Alphawest's plans are to extend the same success beyond their core resources to other systems and into all the other things in their datacenter that would help the business operate in a disaster. "There's also no reason we can't extend the same strategy to business continuity plans for each of our sites. If we replicate our key infrastructure into the cloud, an entire site can just as easily be protected by the cloud in the same way," explains Watts.



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◆ High Availability ◆ Disaster Recovery ◆ Systems and Data Management ◆