

AMBRIAN

"Availability of our applications is critical to how the business runs. With Double-Take Availability and Fundlab, we have a solid platform to support our business operations and support interaction with our clients. Even if we experienced a serious disaster event, our operations would be back up and running within hours as if nothing had happened."

Mike Dack, Operations Manager, Ambrian

Business Profile

Company Name:
Ambrian Capital plc

Headquarters:
London, UK

Industry:
Finance

Business Overview:
Ambrian Capital plc provides corporate finance, stockbroking and commodity trading services to institutional and corporate clients. The company has a wealth of experience in the areas of oil and gas, metals and mining, and cleantech sectors. Ambrian Partners is ranked first in the AIM Basic Materials Sector in the Hemscott Advisers Rankings and was voted No. 2 for small- and mid-cap Metals & Mining in the Extel Survey of fund managers in 2010.

Business Environment:

- Leading corporate financier and broker to the small and mid-cap natural resources sector in London
- Relies on applications to manage trading activity, as well as to keep in contact with corporate and investment clients

Vision Solutions Product:
Double-Take Availability

Implementation Team:
Vision Solutions, Fundlab

Critical issue

Ambrian Capital is a leading investment and financial services company specialising in the natural resources, mining and cleantech sectors. It works with investors and institutional clients to drive value for its operations around the world. Ambrian is listed on the London Stock Exchange. Regulated by the Financial Services Authority, it is required to have a full business continuity strategy in place that would see critical applications and services back up and running within the same day in the event of a disaster.

Results

- Full business continuity strategy implemented by Fundlab to protect critical applications
- Able to recover all data and applications over to backup site within 4 hours
- Business continuity plan managed by trusted IT partner

Technologies

Software

- Double-Take Availability
- Applications protected include Microsoft Exchange 2007, BlackBerry Enterprise Server, SQL Server and trading applications

Hardware

- HP DL380 and DL360 servers at primary site
- Virtualised platform at secondary data centre hosting target servers for recovery, based on VMware and HP StorageWorks SAN

Business Challenge

Ambrian Capital plc is a group of companies that serve the metals and natural resources markets. Made up of five organisations, the group prides itself on its corporate finance, stockbroking and commodity trading services. This includes leading the league table for Basic Materials in the Hemscott AIM Advisers Rankings Guide for the second year running. Ambrian is also listed on the London Stock Exchange.

As part of its services, Ambrian's employees require access to up to date information through various applications, as well as relying on email as a way to keep in constant contact with clients. Staff members have BlackBerry devices for mobile email as well. Any incident of downtime would affect their ability to work, so protecting these applications was a necessary investment.

Ambrian's activities are also covered by the Financial Services Authority (FSA), which requires organisations to have a full business continuity plan in place to cover any impact on business activities. Ambrian has been working with Fundlab, a leading provider of IT management and support services, since 2004, and turned to them for assistance in updating its approach to business continuity.

"We have a long history of working with Fundlab, and they are responsible for managing all our IT assets. When it came round to evaluating our business continuity plans, the team at Fundlab was the natural choice for us to speak to around our needs," commented Mike Dack, Operations Manager at Ambrian.

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Solution

Fundlab looked at the current approach that Ambrian had for recovering applications and data, and saw that there were areas where the speed of recovery could be improved. Des Hudson, the Fundlab manager responsible for managing Ambrian, looked at new approaches that could be employed to cut the amount of potential downtime that would be incurred and reduce the hassle of restoring systems.

“What we were looking for was a way to get all the necessary data that Ambrian held off-site in the most efficient and cost-effective way, as well as ensuring that we could recover all the critical applications and data quickly. These workloads would have to be up and running within the same day in order to meet the FSA guidance on business continuity, as well as ensuring that client service for Ambrian was not unduly affected,” commented Hudson.

Hudson and the team at Fundlab chose Double-Take Availability as the most suitable solution for Ambrian. Double-Take Availability provides data replication from one location to another in real time, and across any IP network. For Ambrian, this meant that data would be protected as it changed on the company network, which was of vital importance for both its own operations and client satisfaction.

Double-Take Availability was installed on seven servers within the Ambrian data centre, covering the group’s Microsoft Exchange 2007 and BlackBerry Enterprise Servers, the primary file server, two Microsoft SQL Servers and bespoke applications for CRM and trading. Data from these applications is replicated across a WAN to a remote site for disaster recovery. The secondary servers receive data from the primary site as soon as any change is made, ensuring that the backup machines are as up to date as possible.

Ambrian’s secondary servers are virtual machines running on a VMware implementation, located on a HP StorageWorks SAN. “The replication of data across to the second site means that each change is moved over as it has been made; this not only keeps the data as fresh as it can be, but also reduces the amount of network bandwidth required. The real-time nature of the data replication is also an important consideration for us, as it means that the amount of data that would be lost during a disaster is minimised,” said Hudson.

Double-Take Availability has already proven its worth to Ambrian and Fundlab in several fail-over trials. These simulated failures included taking a snapshot of the live environments, and then separating the connection between the two sites. Each time, the secondary machines took over the responsibility for running the application services as was planned.

“IT services are increasingly at the heart of business activities, and Ambrian is no exception to this. The implementation of Double-Take Availability has met the needs that Ambrian had around their business continuity requirements - in the event of a failure, all the machines are protected and services can be up and running within the timeframe established. Not only does this implementation ensure that Ambrian is compliant with its requirements as part of the FSA, but it also gives the business greater peace of mind in general to know that they are protected,” said Hudson.



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