"We recently had a fire at one of our Princeville plants. … Thanks to Double-Take, we were already back online at another site before the firemen had extinguished the flames."

Patrice Gagnon, It Manager, Olymel

Business Profile

Company Name:
Olymel L.P.

Headquarters:
St-Hyacinthe, Québec, Canada

Industry:
Food Processing

Business Environment:
• Second-largest pork and poultry processor in Canada
• Sales: More than $2.1-billion in 2010
• Employees: More than 10,000.
• About 25 plants in 4 Canadian provinces
• Customers around the world

Implementation Team:
Vision Solutions, Serti Informatique, Olymel

Critical issue

Olymel has more than 25 facilities across Canada, including plants, distribution centers and its head office, each of which uses local systems and data storage. If a disaster shuts down one of those facilities, the company still needs access to the local data and applications to continue to meet the needs of employees, suppliers and customers.

Results

• Recovered from a fire even before the fire was out.
• Centrally backs up multiple sites across Canada.
• Quickly generates real-life test data for any site.
• Fulfills more stringent Recovery Point Objectives

Technologies

Software:
• Double-Take Availability
• Windows Server 2003
• Custom-built applications

Hardware:
• 60 x IBM System x servers

Business Challenge

Calamities happen. They don't happen often, but they do happen. If a disaster shuts down one of its plants, Olymel needs a way to recover its data and applications so the company can resume operations as quickly as possible.

Comprehensively and cost-effectively safeguarding data and applications is a particular challenge for Olymel because it has 60 servers, including the accompanying storage, distributed in 25 locations across Canada. A centralized backup and recovery strategy would eliminate the need to perform the associated administration work in each location, but not all disaster recovery options support a consolidated approach.

One of the most common disaster recovery strategies depends on nightly tape-based backups. However, this approach has a serious flaw. Data created today is not included on any backup tape. Thus, depending on when it occurs, a disaster may render as much as a full day's worth of data unrecoverable.

Worse, operators sometimes forget to mount tapes in preparation for the nightly backup jobs, tapes are not always sent offsite immediately, and tape failure rates are relatively high. As a result, it may be necessary to revert to a days-old backup tape after a disaster.

Olymel's challenge was to find an affordable way to protect all of its data and applications and allow for rapid recovery should a disaster strike.

Solution

Olymel overcame this challenge with Double-Take Availability. It replicates data in near real-time from the company's 60 servers across Canada to Olymel's head office in St-Hyacinthe, Québec. Now, if a disaster destroys a plant, it's applications and data are safe. The IT department can quickly restore the site's data and applications to spare servers that the company keeps at head office.

What's more, because Double-Take Availability replicates data continuously, its backups are always up-to-date. There is no longer any "orphan data" that might otherwise be lost because is not yet on the previous night's backup tape.

This solution provides the added benefit of allowing the IT department to easily create true-to-life test files from the backup data whenever a developer needs to run tests on a new or modified application for one of the sites.

Olymel knows for certain that its disaster recovery solution works flawlessly because it recently had the misfortune of having to prove it in a real-life situation.

Early one Sunday morning, Olymel's network administrator received a call from the company's telecommunications provider informing him that the link to a plant in Princeville, Québec was down. Maintenance workers, who often work on weekends when the plant isn't operational, are supposed to notify IT when they need to disconnect the telecom link, but they sometimes forget. The network administrator thought this explained the network outage. And, because the plant was closed, he felt he could safely defer looking into the matter.

Then he turned on his television.

The top news story, a serious fire at one of Olymel's Princeville plants, told him that the problem was graver than he thought. Still at home, he connected to the head office systems remotely and initiated Double-Take Availability's recovery processes to restore the plant's servers onto backup servers in head office.

Even before the firefighters finished battling the flames, the plant's applications and data were back online. Managers could then access the human resources database, allowing them to contact employees to tell them to not come in for their normal shifts.

Olymel has a second plant in Princeville, right across the street from the one where the fire occurred. The company later moved spare servers into the conference room of that plant and used Double-Take Availability to restore the affected plant's servers to that facility so the systems could be accessed locally.

In the end, the biggest benefit that Double-Take Availability delivers is peace of mind. Olymel can rest assured that its applications and data are always fully protected, no matter what should happen.

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