



"Double-Take Availability did exactly what it was supposed to do. [After a disaster] the box failed over and the backup took over in a matter of minutes."

Jason Sabshon, Director of IT

Business Profile

Company Name:
Prolifics

Headquarters:
New York, New York, USA

Industry:
IT Services

Business Environment:

- 1,200 employees
- Largest unit of SemanticSpace Group
- Operates worldwide
- Has worked with over 3,000 companies

Implementation Team:
Prolifics and Vision Solutions

Critical issue

Prolifics utterly depends on email in its day-to-day operations. If the physical server running Microsoft Exchange Server were unavailable, a large portion of the communications within the company and with customers and suppliers would stop. Likewise, if its Microsoft Active Directory master server went down, the company would lose the ability to manage much of its IT operations. Thus, Prolifics needs to ensure that these servers are always available, even when a disaster strikes.

Results

- Virtually eliminates downtime during disasters
- No need to perform recovery operations
- Highly automated solution
- Requires almost no ongoing maintenance

Technologies

Software:

- Double-Take Availability
- Microsoft Active Directory
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2007

Hardware:

- HP ProLiant DL180 servers

Business Challenge

Mother nature isn't always gentle. She sometimes unleashes her fury on populated areas, occasionally causing widespread disruptions or even destruction. Hurricane Sandy provided businesses in its path, such as New York-based Prolifics, with tangible proof of this fact.

In light of the potential for natural disasters and other events that might shut servers down, Prolifics needs to be certain that its core systems will function virtually uninterrupted, even when its primary data center is unavailable. Because internal and external communications rely heavily on email, Microsoft Exchange Server is one of those core systems. Another is the company's Microsoft Active Directory master server, which includes all of the FSMO roles for Active Directory.

Because of the critical nature of these systems, traditional backup and recovery approaches, which typically require hours or even days to restore a system, were inadequate. To guarantee business continuity even in the face of a disaster, Prolifics needed a solution that maintained ready-to-run replica servers that could rapidly assume production roles.

Furthermore, the solution had to be more than just effective. It also had to be efficient. Exchange Server manages about 1.2 terabytes of data for Prolifics. Inefficient replication software would have imposed an excessive drain on system performance and network throughput.

Solution

For the past four years, Prolifics has protected the availability of the servers that run Exchange Server and the master Active Directory with Double-Take Availability, from Vision Solutions.

Double-Take Availability maintains replicas of servers by efficiently replicating changed data from the primary server to a backup in real-time. Then, when the primary server is unavailable, the software notifies an administrator and offers him or her the option of initiating a rapid, highly automated failover that limits downtime to minutes.

The solution can be installed quickly and easily. Equally important, it requires almost no ongoing maintenance. It just works. Prolifics spends only about five minutes a day monitoring the software to verify that its replication functions are working properly, with minimal data latency.

Prolifics' decision to use Double-Take Availability was born out of experience. Jason Sabshon, Director of IT at Prolifics, had previously implemented the solution for one of Prolifics' clients. That customer was, to put it mildly, somewhat cynical and quite skeptical about whether the solution would work.

Shabshon dramatically proved that it did indeed work. He pulled the Ethernet cable on the client's production mail server. Double-Take Availability performed flawlessly and failed over to the backup server within four minutes. With that, the client was sold on the solution.

Double-Take Availability also helped to save the day for Prolifics itself during Hurricane Sandy, which cut power to the company's data center on Long Island. Prolifics has a backup power generator, but it was faulty and failed. The company also has a battery-based uninterruptible power supply (UPS), but the batteries won't last for much more than three hours, which was not sufficient to keep the systems going until the external power was restored.

Fortunately, Prolifics was using Double-Take Availability to maintain replicas of its email and master Active Directory servers in a separate recovery facility. That facility's power generator was functioning. After three hours without external power, with the UPS almost drained, Prolifics declared an emergency. It initiated a failover through Double-Take Availability and the backup servers became the production servers within minutes.

Shabshon commends the service provided by Vision Solutions. "Vision offers on-shore technical support. And the tech support people are very skilled at what they do, particularly in comparison to some other vendors."

Prolifics is now a very loyal user of Double-Take Availability. "We tend to stick with products that work well over time and this has done well for us," explained Shabshon. "In turn, we expect to be a customer-for-life."



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