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"We've had instances where we had to fail-over from one system to the other and it worked seamlessly, just as I had envisioned. I am impressed it could do it as well as it did. In fact, the Exchange team has fine tuned the Double-Take environment to failover all Exchange systems in a matter of minutes."

Eric Anderson, Director of Technical Services, Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP

Business Profile

Company Name:
Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP

Headquarters:
Chicago, Illinois

Industry:
Law Firm

Founded:
1906

Business Environment:
- A full-service, international law firm serving many well-known and admired businesses, nonprofits and individuals.
- Maintains a staff of 700 lawyers and other professionals.
- Has offices in 13 U.S. cities and one in Brussels, Belgium.

Vision Solutions Product:
Double-Take® Availability™

Implementation Partner:
ILTA and Vision Solutions

Critical issue

As a large law firm, there were risks associated with missing deadlines for filings and other legal matters that involved the courts. Hence, their highest priorities relating to information management included maintain access to their core systems, and consolidate Microsoft Exchange Server operations in to one data center.

Results

- Moved more than 250 servers with a very complex web of data and applications to a new location with no downtime.
- Consolidated their entire Exchange Server environment to one location with full redundancy.
- Replicates production data to co-location servers in realtime.
- Manages backup and continuity operations for the entire enterprise from a centralized management console.
- Recovery from a server failure occurs within seconds or minutes.

Technologies

- Double-Take Availability
- Microsoft Windows File Sharing
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2003
- BlackBerry Enterprise Server
- OpenText
- Elite
- PeopleSoft

Business Challenge

Information Technology has become a critical tool for most law firms and Sonnenschein Nath & Rosenthal LLP is no exception. In fact, being able to access these systems is not only the livelihood of the firm, but making critical deadlines depends on it.

Sonnenschein is a leader in innovative legal services, serving its clients through integrated, inter-office cooperation and teamwork among practice groups to provide efficient, effective and timely legal services and business counseling. To maintain this level of service, the IT team at Sonnenschein focused on several core initiatives.

In 2004, the IT team at Sonnenschein devised a comprehensive business continuity plan that required a dual datacenter to support the entire firm. With 1700 users in 14 different locations, Sonnenschein required a centralized infrastructure where they co-located services in two separate but equal sites. By using two locations, the firm was able to reduce costs, consolidate their hardware and reach their ultimate goal of 24/7 access to applications and data.

Another major initiative for Sonnenschein's IT team was to consolidate and centralize Microsoft® Exchange® firm-wide. Centralizing Exchange servers from all offices to central data centers offers a host of benefits including reduced complexity, enhanced business continuity, and easier management with software upgrades and optimizing data storage.

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Solution

Sonnenschein began to look at vendor offerings including products developed by Vision Solutions. Although Vision Solutions had a great reputation in the legal community, it was imperative that Sonnenschein test the software, as well as other products. With Double-Take Availability the clear winner due to its ease of use, centralized management, and superior replication performance, Vision Solutions became their technology partner.

Sonnenschein focused on their Exchange environment project first. It was an easy way to enhance their business continuity objectives to reduce the financial, legal, and business risks related to the loss of Exchange server data.

Sonnenschein made the decision to centralize their email at their data center and remove email servers from each office. Sonnenschein was able to leverage the byte level replication features in Double-Take Availability to migrate Exchange data from remote offices to their primary data center over their existing WAN infrastructure. Centralizing the entire mail system, however, was a risk. If the system were to fail, the entire firm would be without email. To eliminate the risk and increase the confidence level with centralization, Sonnenschein added Double-Take Availability to this environment as well.

Their plan added a level of redundancy, and also would allow the firm to move all data back to the central data centers. Sonnenschein used three 3-node Exchange clusters, and deployed Double-Take Availability to provide data protection and high availability to all users.

After the core systems were established at both data centers, getting the data back to the firm's data center was one of the high pain points of their Exchange centralization project, which Vision Solutions was able to solve.

Sonnenschein then decided to look at leveraging it for their big move to the data center in a Chicago suburb. Server consolidation and data center moves can deliver significant benefits – including cost savings, enhanced business continuity, optimized service management, and improved regulatory compliance. Their goal was to move more than 250 servers with a very complex web of data and applications (including Exchange Server 2003, BlackBerry Enterprise Server, OpenText DMS, Elite, PeopleSoft, Windows File Sharing and multiple custom applications) from their downtown co-location facility to their new co-location facility in the suburbs without their users experiencing any downtime.

Prior to the move, the Sonnenschein team started failing systems over in advance to minimize the risk of downtime or a bad user experience. When it was all said and done, the users experienced minimal, if any, issues. Through the use of Double-Take Availability, Sonnenschein replicated their servers and data to corresponding servers at the new data center. In some cases, these servers were Virtual Servers using VMWare®.

"Using Double-Take has made moving a data center easier," said Anderson. "It was easy to configure and easy to manage because applications did not have to be pre-installed nor maintained on the target."

Now with Exchange centralized in the two locations, to ensure complete knowledge of Double-Take Availability and the ability to failover when needed, the Sonnenschein team continues to alternate between data centers regularly.

Anderson states, "The time to learn that you are not configured properly or able to failover quickly is not during a crisis. You have to be prepared and able to react quickly with the confidence that your systems will continue as planned when it matters most."

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