

Case Study: Tribune Company

Double-Take® Software Customer Profile

Company: Tribune Company
Business: Media Publishing and Broadcasting
Offices: Nationwide
Employees: 22,000
Needs: One standardized information system



Business

A leading Fortune 500 national media company focused mainly on publishing and broadcasting. Tribune's media outlets reach over 80 percent of U.S. households, and include the Los Angeles Times, Chicago Tribune, and 26 television channels.

Customer Challenge

Migrate 30 different email systems and 22,000 users to a standardized and centralized Exchange system with distance-based protection.

Tribune Company – Don't Stop the Presses

Tribune is a major source of news and information throughout the country. Its main business is information, which makes internal messaging an important piece of day-to-day operations. In fact, Tribune has a staff of 12 IT professionals dedicated solely to managing its messaging systems.

With media outlets and other businesses around the country, keeping standardized information systems is a challenge. Tribune had about 30 different email systems operating in different environments including Microsoft Exchange, Lotus Notes and Novell GroupWise. In order to make its messaging system easier to manage, the company decided to standardize on one system, and migrate all of its 22,000 users to Microsoft® Exchange 2003.

While the migration to Exchange would make management and end-user support much easier, it would also expose the company to a major risk. With 30 different email systems, if one went down due to a system outage or other disaster, the incident would be isolated and the rest of the company would have email while the one outage was being resolved. But by centralizing everyone on to the same system, Tribune was putting all its eggs in one basket.

After migrating the entire company to Exchange 2003, an outage of any kind would affect a lot of people. Not only would the 22,000 users at Tribune potentially lose email, but it could also affect the loyal viewers and readership that depend upon Tribune as a source for up-to-the-minute and day-to-day news.

“An email outage could affect us in many ways. We would be hit especially hard if email went down on a big news day like the presidential election, for example,” said Alex Duncan, Manager of Enterprise Messaging, Tribune Company. “Email is not mission critical, but it’s certainly business critical.”

As a first level of protection, Tribune consolidated the multiple mail systems into two formidable Microsoft Clusters in Chicago and Los Angeles. The site in Chicago operated on a six-node cluster with four active nodes (each with an Exchange instance and multiple storage groups) and two redundant nodes. The Los Angeles cluster is similar with five nodes (three active / two passive). These two clusters represent almost five terabytes of Exchange data.

Recognizing that business continuity doesn’t stop with the local high availability provided by Microsoft Clusters, Tribune sought distance-based protection through its IT integrator and through Dell. Both recommended Double-Take® from Double-Take Software.

Tribune Deploys Double-Take

By forecasting the potential risks of moving its users to the same email system, Tribune knew that something had to be done to ensure data protection and high availability. Alex Duncan and his team considered a wide range of options in order to find the most appropriate solution for Tribune. Possible solutions included storage-based technologies (SAN), host-based technologies (software) and a variety of application availability technologies.

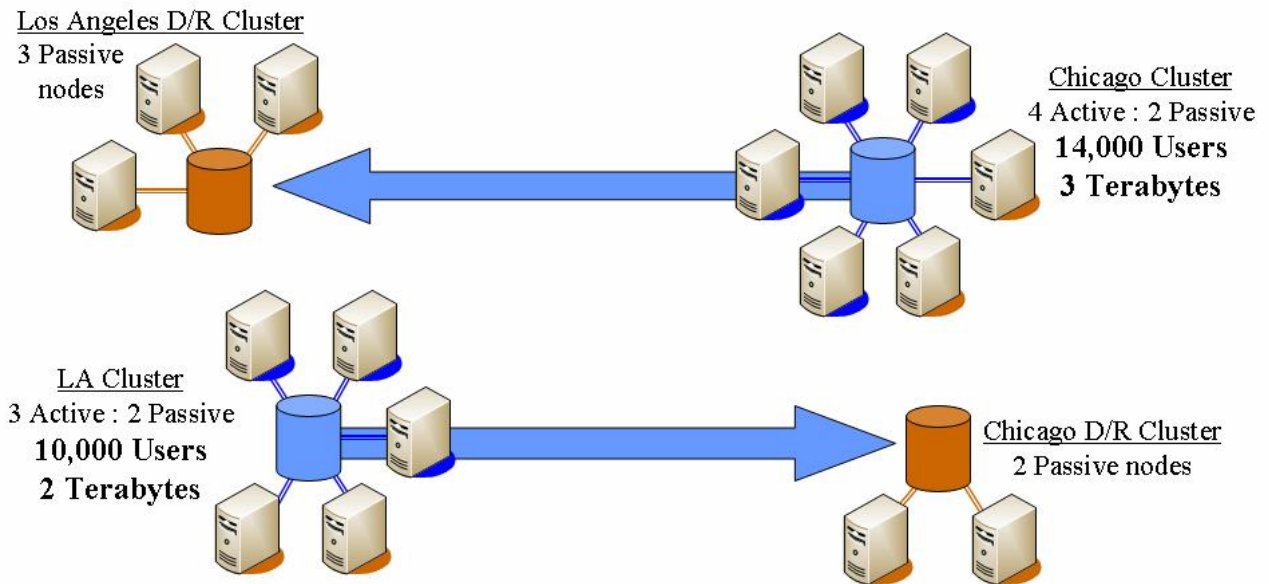
Based on recommendations from its integrator partner and its server vendor, and after conducting its own due diligence, Tribune decided on a host-based, real-time replication solution from Double-Take. Double-Take provides a stable and flexible technology at a considerably less expensive price than other alternatives. Engaging with Double-Take included not only the sales and services teams, but also leveraged Double-Take Software’s partnership with Microsoft for acceptance testing during the deployment. At a Microsoft lab in Chicago, Tribune verified the viability of Double-Take as a final measure, and the first production deployments immediately followed.

“Because of the large number of users we support, and the high importance of protecting our email after the Exchange migration, we wanted to verify our decision in a working environment,” said Duncan. “Microsoft’s lab in Chicago provided us with an ideal situation to test the solution before going live.”

The resulting solution provides for 11 production clustered nodes (six in Chicago and five in LA):

- If a node fails within a site, the first and completely automatic failover occurs within MSCS.
- If a broader crisis occurs, such as a system failure or natural disaster, the two sites protect each other using Double-Take. When the target cluster determines that the production cluster/site has failed, Double-Take will start the Exchange cluster services and re-enable users at the redundant location. This can be completely automated or require a one-button confirmation.

Data is constantly being replicated from Chicago to LA, and vice-versa. The Chicago six node (6N) cluster can fail over to a redundant 3N in LA, and likewise, the Los Angeles 5N cluster can fail to a redundant two node in Chicago. With this configuration all messaging for 22,000 users and 5+ Terabytes of data is redundant from the database level all the way to a site-crisis and across 1700 miles.



Tribune had a few other requirements for data protection, including the ability to intervene manually and give IT administrators the power to decide when a failover was necessary. They also wanted to have the ability to failback easily and to return to its original servers once an issue had been resolved. "A simple failback procedure was key to this implementation," said Duncan.

Implementing Double-Take

Tribune hired Double-Take Professional Services to install the additional clustering components, replication software and Exchange applications, and also provide scripts to fit its failover criteria. Technically, Double-Take could failover automatically in about 30 seconds, but Tribune required manual intervention to make sure the system failed-over only when it was an absolute necessity. To simplify the manual failover, Double-Take wrote a script that allows Tribune to 'push one button' if it chooses to failover to the target server(s).

Once Double-Take was installed and ready go, two training sessions were held for Tribune's staff – one in Chicago and one in LA. Each session explained how Double-Take works, and provided an overview of the different configurations available, while encompassing the unique aspects of Tribune's specific solution. With proper training, Tribune's staff was immediately able to maintain the environment themselves – which could include growing the solution as the need for protection extends past Exchange to other key systems.

Now, with two Exchange production clusters in Chicago and Los Angeles, each location serves as a back up in the event of an emergency at the other location. Once a failover is complete, users are up-and-running with the ability to send and receive email without even logging out of Exchange. After Tribune resolves any issues, failback to the original servers can happen in about 30 seconds – which is an easy task to perform after business hours. "News is a 24 x 7 business that never stops," explains Duncan. "Having a proper backup and recovery plan is a critical piece of the puzzle to make sure that we don't stop either."

For more information, please visit www.doubletake.com.

About Double-Take® Software

Headquartered in Southborough, Massachusetts, Double-Take® Software [NASDAQ: DBTK] provides the world's most relied upon solution for accessible and affordable data protection for Microsoft® Windows® applications. The Double-Take product is the standard in data replication, enabling customers to protect and recover business-critical data that resides throughout their enterprise. With its partner programs and professional services, Double-Take delivers unparalleled data protection, centralized back-up, high availability, and recoverability. It's the solution of choice for thousands of worldwide customers, from SMEs to the Fortune 500 in the banking, finance, legal services, retail, manufacturing, government, education and healthcare markets. Double-Take is an integral part of their disaster recovery, business continuity and overall storage strategies. For more information, please visit www.doubletake.com.

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