



"Vision Solutions has been a crucial part of a two part success story; The first being through hardware reduction facilitated by Microsoft and Dell computers, and the second through a comprehensive offsite disaster recovery plan facilitated by Double-Take Availability."

Ray Pawlikowski, President and CEO, HotSchedules, Inc.

Business Profile

Company Name:
HotSchedules, Inc.

Headquarters:
Austin, Texas

Industry:
Online Restaurant Workforce
Management

Founded:
1999

Business Environment:

- SaaS business model is highly reliant on technology.
- Service Level Agreements with clients are at the core of their business.
- Supports 300,000 online users every day.

Vision Solutions Product:
Double-Take® Availability

Critical issue

Rapid growth resulted in reactive expansion and a decentralized computing environment with numerous servers and a heavy reliance on network bandwidth. HotSchedules opted to centralize and virtualize its resources to help control cost and simplify operations. To minimize the risk of downtime and data loss, HotSchedules included in its blueprint a requirement for automated backup and restore.

Results

- Recovery from a major production system failure occurs in a few minutes.
- Uptime requirements specified in Service Level Agreements are maintained.
- Failover to Hyper-V virtualized servers is effective and simple.
- Over 60 parameters can be monitored from a management console.

Technologies

- Double-Take Availability
- Windows Server 2008 R2 Hyper-V
- MS SQL Server
- Several customer online workforce scheduling applications
- Dell PowerVault iSCSI storage

Business Challenge

HotSchedules is the premier provider of online restaurant workforce management solutions. Their suite of solutions is designed to improve online scheduling and management-employee communications, resulting in greater employee satisfaction, retention and a fast, proven ROI. HotSchedules, Inc. has grown quickly and now has more than 2,750 restaurants and over 300,000 users relying on HotSchedules everyday.

Like many organizations that experience quick significant growth, HotSchedules ran into a few challenges including demands on the company's data center. While the company wanted to maintain growth and flexibility, HotSchedules continued to deploy physical servers and as a result, also experienced the high cost of decentralized computing.

To pro-actively tackle this business problem, Matt Woodings, Chief Technology Officer at HotSchedules, worked closely with Dell Global Infrastructure Consulting Services, in an effort to deploy the Windows Server 2008 operating system with Hyper-V™ virtualization technology to consolidate its server environment, reduce costs, and maximize network performance.

Solution

As part of a Dell project for Disaster Recovery and redundancy, Vision Solutions was introduced as a leader in the offsite data protection realm. "Double-Take Availability from Vision Solutions was the only software for DR and data protection that could adhere to the strict service level agreements that are in place for HotSchedules," said Ray Pawlikowski, HotSchedules' president and CEO. "Maximizing uptime with a solid disaster recovery plan was critical to our success and we looked to Vision Solutions' products to help us achieve this goal."



HotSchedules selected Double-Take Availability to protect their Hyper-V virtual machines and SQL server databases. Double-Take Availability is software that combines patented replication and failover technologies to capture and replicate changes, in real time, to a secondary server at any location. If recovery is necessary, Double-Take Availability can recover from that location in minutes.

First, HotSchedules consolidated more than 50 physical servers to 3 Dell PowerEdge nodes with Dell PowerVault iSCSI storage hosting the 50+ virtual nodes. Double-Take Availability has enabled replicating these machines in the current state offsite. Instead of having to purchase, run and maintain 50+ offsite machines, HotSchedules now only needs 3 physical machines which is incredibly cost effective.

Double-Take Availability is used to replicate databases and critical single instance virtual machines (SMTP Servers, Secure-FTP Servers, Transaction Servers, etc.) offsite to attain high levels of data integrity. This also makes it easy for HotSchedules to adhere to the strict SLAs which is extremely important to ensure new client engagements. The HotSchedules' commitment to a stringent SLA is at the heart of a successful agreement and is a critical factor in securing a long-term client relationship.

In addition to data replication, HotSchedules can leverage the built-in failover features in Double-Take Availability to assure maximum uptime and performance of their business-critical applications. If the production server fails for any reason, then it can fail over and be restarted on the target Hyper-V host and continue processing as normal without having to wait hours, as is required when restoring from a backup. Thus the recovery time objective (RTO), the maximum tolerable length of time that a computer, system, network, or application can be down after a failure or disaster occurs, of the new HotSchedules environment is now measured in minutes, or about as fast as the virtual machine can boot.

Double-Take Availability replicates and fails over their Microsoft Hyper-V virtual machines in real-time, locally or over any distance, and without complexity. Double-Take Availability also allows the company to use any available storage hardware to store virtual machine data in production or at the DR site. In this case, HotSchedules was working closely with Dell since the Dell servers were extremely configurable, with the fastest and highest bandwidth processors.

Instead of complex replication and backup plans, HotSchedules now uses Double-Take Availability for near real-time replication of their data to an offsite location for their SQL database. "Double-Take Availability is a smart product," said Pawlikowski. "It automated the setup and configuration of replication and failover monitoring of our SQL servers and checked over 60 different configuration criteria. This definitely helped us achieve a seamless, error-proof deployment."

Double-Take Availability can also perform recovery and fallback of SQL servers with minimal downtime. By performing recovery tasks while users remain online, downtime for HotSchedules is reduced to just the few moments that it takes for Double-Take Availability to stop and start the necessary services and relegate processing back to the production server.

"When presented with the products from Vision Solutions at their price points, I didn't need to look any further," added Pawlikowski. "And working with Vision Solutions has only reinforced my decision. They are very easy to do business with."



15300 Barranca Parkway, Irvine, CA 92618
1-800-957-4511 ▪ 1-801-799-0300 ▪ visionsolutions.com



High Availability Disaster Recovery Systems and Data Management