

S.H. Smith & Company, Inc.

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Gene Barnes, IT Manager, S.H. Smith & Company

Business Profile

Company Name:
S.H. Smith & Company, Inc.

Headquarters:
Hartford, Connecticut

Industry:
Insurance Brokers

Founded:
1982

Business Environment:

- One of the largest owned specialty lines insurance brokers in the country.
- Strives to provide 24/7 access to critical business systems.
- Serves insurance dealers in domestic and foreign markets.

Vision Solutions Product:
Double-Take® Availability™

Implementation Partner:
Vision Solutions

Critical issue

Without a good disaster recovery plan, a system failure or site disaster could have a serious financial impact on their business and damage relationships with their agents and customers.

Results

- Implemented Double-Take Availability without having to make significant changes to their existing environment.
- Implemented a one-to-many configuration for Exchange and SQL servers.
- Integrates with VMware GSX to protect five servers.
- Protects all local and remote systems and facilitates server failover in minutes.
- Automatic throttling accommodates limited T1 bandwidth capacity.

Technologies

- Double-Take Availability
- Microsoft Windows
- Microsoft Exchange Server
- VMware GSX

Business Challenge

S.H. Smith & Company is one of the largest independently owned excess and surplus brokers in the country and the largest in the Northeast. Licensed to work in all 50 states, and a Lloyds of London broker, they represent more than 70 domestic and foreign markets. S.H. Smith believes that integrity, stability and financial strength are the foundations of a successful relationship. They also believe that insurance is based on trust. With such a delicate concept, the highest standards of business and personal behavior rely heavily on the ability to provide 24/7 access to critical information and business systems.

Unfortunately, S.H. Smith & Company did not have a solid disaster recovery plan. Without an updated disaster recovery plan in place, an outage could potentially have a major impact on their business. In order to protect their business and to continue to provide the support that their clients are accustomed to, they needed to enhance their disaster recovery plan.

With the need for an enhanced disaster recovery plan to ensure business continuity, S.H. Smith looked to increase their support with a new IT Manager, Gene Barnes. Fortunately, Barnes brought to the company a great deal of experience in high availability and disaster recovery.

After a careful analysis of the company's business environment and existing IT infrastructure, Barnes decided that he needed a solution that enhanced their disaster recovery plan, worked with HP SAN and VMware GSX, had reliable high availability and failover capabilities, and was easy to install and configure.

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Solution

Having gone through a process similar to this one in his previous position, Barnes opted to streamline the project and call Vision Solutions. According to Barnes, “I worked with Vision’s Double-Take Availability product before and have always been impressed with its capabilities. One of the most important features of the implementation at S.H. Smith was that I could do it without making significant changes to the existing production environment. It was an easy decision for us because Double-Take Availability was a very low risk but high return solution.”

Currently, S.H. Smith is using Double-Take Availability to protect three Exchange servers, one SQL server, and the main file server with a one-to-many configuration. They have an HP storage area network that hosts the five protected servers using VMware GSX. Three of the servers are in the same physical location, and the other two are located about 70 miles away. Replication for the remote office occurs across a bonded T1 line and is throttled to use 60% of the available bandwidth to allow for a low impact on production resources.

“I needed something that I could test on a regular basis, implement quickly, use with my existing hardware, and a solution that had little impact on my current environment,” said Barnes. “Double-Take was able to meet or exceed all of these demands.”

With the need for improved data protection and disaster recovery, S.H. Smith & Company, like many organizations looked to leverage their existing VMware- virtual infrastructure with Double-Take Availability. By using VMware with Double-Take Availability replication and failover, S.H. Smith achieved the high level of data protection and availability it required in a cost-effective way.

Using Double-Take Availability with VMware, S.H. Smith will save a significant amount of money on infrastructure costs alone. There are also untold benefits in time savings, the flexibility to scale with growth, and mandated requirements to meet business continuity needs.

“Vision Solutions is helping our business because it gives me a comfort level that comes with having a verifiable disaster recovery solution that can be tested at any time. “By reducing potential down-time from days to minutes, Double-Take Software has the potential to save our company significant money,” said Barnes.

The products and services provided by Vision Solutions enable customers to protect and recover business-critical data and applications to support disaster recovery, high availability and centralized backup. Double-Take Availability utilizes patented real-time replication technology that captures byte-level changes as they happen and replicates those changes to one or more target servers at any location, locally or at a recovery site miles away. With the continuous data replication and built-in failover capabilities within Double-Take Availability, S.H. Smith & Company can now be back online within minutes with no data loss.



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-  High Availability
-  Disaster Recovery
-  Systems and Data Management
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