Firm Finds Continuity Solution Supports Everything From IT Updates to Business Growth

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Christopher Janoch, Senior Network Engineer, Powell Goldstein

The law firm of Powell Goldstein LLP wanted a business continuity solution to help ensure its survival in case of a catastrophic IT failure. It found that solution in Double-Take® for Windows® from Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner Double-Take Software. Beyond providing disaster recovery, the solution facilitates everything from software updates and hardware refreshes to opening and maintaining remote offices.

Customer: Powell Goldstein
Web Site: www.pogolaw.com
Customer Size: 250 employees
Country or Region: United States
Industry: Legal services
Partner: Double-Take Software
Partner Web Site: www.doubletake.com

Customer Profile
Powell Goldstein LLP, based in Atlanta, Georgia with offices in Washington, D.C. and throughout the South, offers services in more than 18 practice areas and represents corporations worldwide.

Software and Services
- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
  - Microsoft Exchange Server 2007
  - Microsoft SQL Server 2005

For more information about other Microsoft customer successes, please visit: www.microsoft.com/resources/casestudies

Business Needs

The law firm of Powell Goldstein LLP—with more than 700 attorneys in Atlanta; Dallas; Charlotte, North Carolina; Minneapolis; and Washington. D.C.—prides itself on its 98-year history. And it wants to be around for at least another 98 years.

A decade ago, the firm's attorneys might have taken its continued existence as a given. But today, what organization can afford that nonchalance? Both disasters of human origin, such as September 11 and the London and Madrid bombings, and natural ones, such as Hurricane Katrina, have reinforced the idea that no organization can ignore the potential for calamity.

"We saw law firms in Mississippi go out of business because all the information they had was stored on computers that were lost during Katrina," says Christopher Janoch, Senior Network Engineer at Powell Goldstein. "We didn't want that to happen to us."

The law firm's technology infrastructure was typical for a large enterprise with multiple offices, including server computers in each facility. The firm relied on Microsoft® Exchange Server 2003 Enterprise Edition for

e-mail, Microsoft SQL Server® 2000 and SQL Server 2005 for database support, and EMC for storage-area network capability. Powell Goldstein had never experienced an enterprise-wide outage, but it occasionally lost service when a system component failed. Any downtime on the system had direct impact on the ability of the firm's lawyers and other professionals to work on behalf of clients, and, thus, it had direct impact on the firm's revenues.

"We needed a business continuity solution," says Janoch.

Solution

Powell Goldstein knew that it wanted its business continuity solution to get the firm up and running within 15 minutes of an outage. It considered three options: solutions from CA XOsoft, EMC, and Double-Take Software.

The firm tested the solutions and found CA XOsoft and EMC did not meet its time requirements for system restoration, with the latter taking up to an hour. Powell Goldstein chose Double-Take® for Windows®, from Microsoft Gold Certified Provider Double-Take Software.

The solution, deployed in early 2007, centralizes production data in the firm's Atlanta office and replicates that data over a wide-area network to a disaster recovery facility in Suwanee, Georgia.

The Exchange Server structure consists of three active computers and a passive computer in a cluster in Atlanta, replicating to an identical cluster in Suwanee. The SQL Server structure includes two replicated pairs of two-node, active-active clusters. In all, the firm has more than 4 terabytes of data among the clusters replicated between the two sites.

Double-Take safeguards the clusters, including operating system, applications, and data. The solution is deployed on each cluster in Atlanta and Suwanee, replicating data from the production datacenter to the disaster recovery site every few seconds through integration with the Volume Shadow Copy Service in Windows.

In the event of a failure in Atlanta, Double-Take, working in conjunction with Windows Clustering, automatically fails over to the recovery site and can also use that site to restore the primary clusters in Atlanta.

After adopting Double-Take software, Powell Goldstein began to virtualize and consolidate its servers, including the centralization of services for the Dallas, Charlotte, and Washington, D.C. offices from those facilities to Atlanta. As part of that move, the firm used virtual server support in the Double-Take solution to mirror its virtual environment.

Benefits

Powell Goldstein now has the business continuity solution it wanted—and more.

"Our goal was to be able to restore operations in 15 minutes in the event of an outage," says Janoch. "But our tests show that Double-Take can have us back up and running in a few seconds. This is a tremendously important 'insurance policy' that gives us the confidence that we can recover quickly and fully in the event of any future loss."

Although Powell Goldstein adopted the Double-Take solution for business continuity, it has gained other benefits as well. For example, the solution facilitates the sometimes-complex task of implementing software updates to the clusters.

"Double-Take gives us a hot backup of the entire site," says Janoch. "We can stop replication, implement the update, test it and ensure all services are running properly, and then resume replication. If we accidentally 'hose' a cluster, we can turn on the cluster in the recovery site and not miss a beat."

Similarly, the Double-Take solution has also enabled Powell Goldstein to more easily replace its hardware with more powerful models. When the firm recently refreshed its hardware from dual-processor to quad-processor computers, it failed over to the recovery site, installed the new hardware in the production site, and then replicated its data from the recovery clusters to the new computers.

The solution is even supporting the firm's business growth. Remote offices now run off the Atlanta datacenter, rather than off of local servers, enabling the firm to open a new office in less than a week, compared to the month or more that it took previously.

"Our remote offices are more willing to rely on the central datacenter because they know that the datacenter has complete business continuity protection," says Janoch. "We're able to open offices more quickly and less expensively, and help realize the firm's vision."

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