

CASE STUDY



Allied Bakeries manufactures leading brands Kingsmill, Allinson, Sunblest and Burgen, and has approximately a third share of the bread market in the UK

Background

Allied Bakeries manufactures leading brands Kingsmill, Allinson, Sunblest and Burgen, and has approximately a third share of the bread market in the UK. It also provides a wide range of morning goods, rolls and part-baked breads to retailers from its 13 bakeries situated around the UK. Being in the fast consumer goods business means that all orders are handled and dispatched daily through an electronic processing system, which must remain up and running 24 hours a day.

Challenge

According to Dave Rowland, Head of Infrastructure at Allied Bakeries: "If the order processing procedure were to fail, it would result in immediate loss of trade and reputation, not only for the Group and individual bakeries but also for the hundreds of retail outlets that we supply. This, coupled with the short lifecycle of our products, means that any downtime in the system – notably server failure and the ensuing loss of data – is simply not a viable option."

The Business Requirements

In order to mitigate the risk of a breakdown in the order processing system, it was decided to seek a robust backup data replication process to ensure that a viable contingency operation could spring into action in the event of a system failure. It was agreed that one of the key requirements should be the installation of a high resilience, low-cost data replication business continuity solution that could be used to backup the functioning of significant servers.

Server failover and data replication is a vital component of any disaster recovery procedure and employs backup servers to swing into action in the event of unplanned downtime, without the loss of any vital information. Companies that perform 24x7 operations are particularly vulnerable to server failure and the impact this can have on the functioning of their business. If failure does occur, organisations need to have a reliable solution in place that ensures continuous access to data and applications on secondary backup servers, which will enable them to resume normal operations within seconds to minutes of an outage without any risk to their performance and reputation.

The IT Shared Service Centre and each bakery within the company has a number of servers and backup servers installed for order process control and other day-to-day and critical applications. This means that Allied Bakeries has a network of around 200 servers which all need to be running almost continuously, all of the time. Allied Bakeries felt that it lacked a coherent IT failover strategy for cases when servers failed and therefore went about finding a remedy for this.

Allied Bakeries required a technical solution that would enable it to develop a bespoke server and data backup system covering all 13 bakeries throughout the UK as well as the IT Shared Services Centre based in Liverpool.

The Solution

After looking at a number of options, Dave Rowland settled on a straightforward, simple and consistent business continuity solution, which would be cost-effective for the business. Rowland chose Double-Take Software's Double-Take solution, a data replication product.

Double-Take provides continuous, real-time byte level data replication and server failover – allowing the complete redundancy of data on one server – and therefore

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continuous access to data and applications on another server. The product is one of Microsoft's preferred data replication engines, due to its ability to replicate vital data in real-time to a backup or failover server located anywhere in the world.

According to Rowland: ***"After evaluating a number of data replication products, we found Double-Take to be a straightforward product, which is application independent, easy to manage and can be applied to all our Windows platforms. Double-Take just seemed to work out-of-the-box – it did what it said it would do so we chose it."***

Benefits include:

- Reliable, real-time replication
- No file pre-scan required to identify changed files (after initial mirror)
- Preservation of file level security (i.e. windows ACL's)
- Open file handling
- Effective replication between systems linked by low bandwidth connections
- The ability to replicate between non-identical hardware and different operating systems
- One-to-One, One-to-Many and Many-to-One replication capability
- Minimal impact on performance of source and target systems
- Cost effective

The Framework

A key factor to the success of the project was that not only did Double-Take Software provide in-depth, specialist knowledge and support for Double-Take, but it was also able to adapt and apply its knowledge to deliver the right solution for Allied Bakeries.

According to Ian Masters, UK Sales Director at Double-Take Software: "It was clear from the outset that Allied Bakeries required a bespoke solution, so we spent time training the relevant staff on the technology behind these systems (SQL and Biztalk) and empowered them with the necessary knowledge to design their own solution around Double-Take. This framework gave the relevant people the right skills to apply the technology and consequently build solutions which meet their very specific requirements. It was about applying our knowledge to product functionality to give the client what they wanted."

Allied Bakeries' Dave Rowland continued: "Double-Take Software provided excellent evaluation, testing and deployment of Double-Take, as well as being very supportive throughout product training.

"The way we are driving the solution at the moment is that each secondary server monitors its primary server and if it sees a problem, it will raise the alarm with the network centre. The operator will then decide whether the primary server is going to fix itself and make a decision to failover or not. This helps the overall management of all servers and acts as an insurance policy."

The Results

According to Rowland: "There is a lot of confidence in the system from the technical team who support the application. We also benefit from constant access to Double-Take's resources, as well as a competitive rate for the provision of licences and ongoing support."

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About Allied Bakeries

Allied Bakeries commands a one third share of the UK bread market, baking some of Britain's most popular brands such as Kingsmill, Allinson and Sunblest. It also provides a wide range of morning goods, rolls and part-baked bread for bake-off in retailers' stores. Its products are delivered to a myriad of outlets, ranging from major multiple to corner shops. The company, founded in 1935 by the Weston family, has more than 20 operating sites spread from Cornwall to Dundee. It is part of Associated British Foods plc (ABF), the international food, ingredients and retail group, which has 35,000 employees. ABF is one of Europe's largest food companies and has significant business in Australasia and the USA. Its other brands include Ovaltine, Mazola cooking oil, Twinings teas, Ryvita crispbread and Silver Spoon sugar.

About Double-Take Software

Headquartered in Southborough, Massachusetts, Double-Take® Software (Nasdaq: DBTK) is a leading provider of affordable software for recoverability, including continuous data replication, application availability and system state protection. Double-Take Software products and services enable customers to protect and recover business-critical data and applications such as Microsoft Exchange, SQL, and Sharepoint in both physical and virtual environments. With its unparalleled partner programs, technical support, and professional services, Double-Take Software is the solution of choice for more than ten thousand customers worldwide, from SME's to the Fortune 500. Information about Double-Take Software's products and services can be found at www.doubletake.com.

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