

Apollo Group Case Study



Project Summary:

With offices distributed across the UK, The Apollo Group's employees use the company's IT systems to collaborate on projects both large and small. Access to information and files is critical to the successful delivery of projects, therefore these systems must be available at all times. To protect these applications and data, and to ensure fast recovery in the event of a failure, a full business continuity strategy was required.

Introduction

Established in 1976, The Apollo Property Services Group has over 30 years experience of working successfully within the public sector housing market. The group originally began operations in the challenging London and the South East regions and following a programme of planned and steady growth it has expanded to open new offices in Scotland, the East of England and the South West. The Apollo Group offers a comprehensive range of services, from maintenance and refurbishment of individual properties through to the delivery of complete estate regeneration projects and the building of award-winning schools.

The Apollo Group is made up of three main business groups, covering social housing, education and public sector building development. Each unit is responsible for carrying out refurbishment, maintenance and new build projects across their respective areas. The company is involved in supporting the Decent Homes Standard, as well as the Building Schools for the Future programme.

Challenge

With over 100 offices spread across the country, The Apollo Group relies on its central application platforms to help employees work on projects together, as well as providing a central repository for company data and plans. All IT services are centrally supplied from the company's head offices, based in Waltham Abbey.

Mark Bowell, Infrastructure and Network Manager for The Apollo Group, is responsible for the provision of all the necessary applications and services to users. As part of this, he runs the company's business continuity plan, to ensure that services remain available for users to access.

Statement:

"IT is vital to a company like ours, where multiple offices have to be supported. Key applications for our users include email for communication around projects, Microsoft SharePoint for collaboration and our file servers, which host project work and planning documents. Each of these systems is critical to our users, so they have to be protected against any risk of downtime," commented Mark Bowell, Infrastructure and Network Manager for the Apollo Group.

Purchase Process and Decision

In order to protect the company's key applications and data, Double-Take Software data replication product was chosen. Double-Take Availability replicates data asynchronously and in real time from the production servers to the target machines, providing an up-to-date copy of all the information that is being generated. In the event of a failure, The Apollo Group would be able to restore its systems with minimal potential for lost data.

Double-Take Availability 

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"We were looking for a solution that would provide us with high availability for our data, as well as achieving a cost-effective business continuity platform for the future. When we looked at the technology options that were out there, Double-Take was the best choice for us," said Mark.

Implementation

Double-Take was originally installed to protect Apollo Group's file servers, followed by Microsoft Exchange for email and the company's Microsoft Dynamics NAV enterprise resource planning software. Data is replicated from the production servers over to secondary servers to provide high availability for all the company's files, as well as for the email system. *"In total, ten servers are protected with Double-Take: each of these machines hosts a service which is crucial to how our employees work. The data is replicated across the WAN to our DR facility, so even in the event of a full site failure, we can recover instantly and with the latest copy of our information."*

Amongst the critical services to be protected with Double-Take is the Apollo Group SharePoint database, which is based on Microsoft SQL Server. *"As the company has grown its systems and added further areas and services, the use of Double-Take has also expanded. The SharePoint application is hosted within VMware with images taken, which provides it with some high availability capability. However, the database that is used to support the service is too large and too critical to be hosted on a virtual machine, and has its own dedicated server,"* explained Mark. *"Some of the projects that are running are completely based on SharePoint, so if the database is not available, then it leads to unhappy employees and a drop in productivity until service could be restored."*

Conclusion

Apollo Group has been a Double-Take Software customer for more than three years, and during that time the Business Continuity Plan has been invoked both for testing purposes and during real life incidents.

"We run through regular business continuity test procedures, failing servers over and back again so that we can be sure the process works and that all our staff are familiar with the technology involved. In all our experience using Double-Take, it has done exactly what was required of it, each and every time." quoted Mark.

To find out more about Apollo Group, please go to:
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Double-Take Availability

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About Double-Take® Software

Headquartered in Southborough, Massachusetts, Double-Take® Software (Nasdaq: DBTK) is a leading provider of affordable Workload Optimisation products that are simple to use and enable IT managers to easily move, protect, recover and more flexibly run critical IT workloads in physical and virtual environments, regardless of platform or location. With its unparalleled partner programs, technical support, and professional services, Double-Take Software is the solution of choice for more than 19,000 customers worldwide, from SMEs to the Fortune 500. Information about Double-Take Software's products and services can be found at www.doubletake.com.