



“Insurance and reinsurance group Canopus needed a robust business continuity strategy in place alongside a migration to a new SAN platform. With Double-Take® Move and Double-Take® Availability, the company achieved its migration faster and saved over £180,000 in costs”.

Business Profile

Company Name:
Canopus Group

Headquarters: Guernsey

Industry: International insurance and reinsurance group

Revenue: £425m

Employees: 479

Implementation Team:
CWL Systems

Products:
Double-Take® Move™
Double-Take® Availability™

Canopus is an insurance and reinsurance company based within Lloyd’s of London. The company has grown its financial resources to over £400 million, and Canopus Managing Agents is the largest privately-held managing agent within Lloyd’s.

As part of its growth strategy, Canopus has expanded its business both by acquisition and by organic development. However, the increase of business-to-business communications across the Internet meant that the company had to re-evaluate its IT strategy for the future, including how it approached business continuity. The company’s charges for data vaulting had gone up considerably as data volumes expanded. This level of cost pushed Canopus into considering new storage options.

Critical Issues

In place, Canopus had an existing Fibre Channel storage area network (SAN) that was rapidly approaching capacity. The company was also attracting additional charges with the company’s disaster recovery site provider due to this SAN and the amount of data that was being protected at the second site. Brent Gebbie, Infrastructure Services Manager at Canopus, was tasked with looking at how to solve this problem.

“In order to support business growth and reduce costs, we had to look at a new strategy around our storage and approach to continuity in the future. explained Mr. Gebbie. After investigating the options, we decided that a new storage infrastructure had to be implemented, and that a new SAN based on iSCSI would meet the company’s needs best. However, migrating from one SAN provider to a different vendor, from one type of storage network to another, and doing this with absolute minimal downtime represented an enormous headache for the IT team.”

Mr Gebbie and the team at Canopus also recognised the next challenge: once the new iSCSI SAN was in place, all of the systems and data would have to be fully protected so that Canopus could meet its recovery point and time objectives.

Challenges

Working with IT continuity specialists CWL Systems, Mr. Gebbie first had to decide on the iSCSI SAN platform that Canopus would use, and how to get all the critical data from its existing SAN onto the new hardware. Alongside a HP LeftHand iSCSI SAN, CWL Systems recommended Double-Take® Move as a way to move all the existing data to the new SAN in a faster, more efficient manner.

“Before Double-Take, it would have taken several weeks to complete the new implementation, and caused a severe delay to when the new SAN would deliver value back to the business. With Double-Take® Move, we were able to get this completed automatically in a few days,” said Mr. Gebbie.

Following on from the migration and set-up of the new primary SAN, Canopus then looked at how it could re-use its previous Fibre Channel SAN at the company’s hosted disaster recovery site. Because it is independent of the storage infrastructure and network, Double-Take Availability could be used to replicate all company data from the new iSCSI SAN through to the DR site, where the old SAN was now located.



With back-up versions of the company's servers hosted as virtual machines and updated in real time, Canopius now has more up-to-date copies of its critical workloads and data, and has drastically reduced the time it takes to recover in the event of a full site failure. Whereas the recovery time was previously estimated to be several days, Canopius can now have its full systems back up and available at its DR site within 45 minutes.

"When we originally brought in Double-Take® Move, it was for the migration of data, but CWL demonstrated how the data replication capabilities in Double-Take Availability could also provide us with more value. By combining Double-Take® Availability with our existing SAN, we could re-use our hardware and save substantially on the costs of hosting data," continued Mr. Gebbie.

The whole project took days instead of weeks to complete and now instead of relying on tape backups, they continuously replicate all company data from the live environment to virtual servers at Canopius' hosted disaster recovery environment, which are attached to the recycled Fibre Channel SAN.

Conclusion

Mr. Gebbie is now able to provide faster recovery of workloads as part of the business continuity plan at Canopius. *"We have successfully tested our fail-over strategy, and we can have a full set of applications available for use far faster than with our previous approach. Recovery time in the event of a full site failure has been cut from several days to about 45 minutes. Our Microsoft Exchange environment took 23 hours to recover, but with the new approach based on Double-Take Availability it now takes just 14 minutes to have the system up and running again,"* he explained. *"In addition to this, performing individual invocations for tests or to install an upgrade on our live environment is also much quicker and cheaper."*

The result is that Canopius, which is regulated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA), has strengthened its compliance regarding data recovery. The FSA requires the company to perform two full business continuity invocations each year as they must be able to recover data within a 'reasonable' time. Canopius' implementation demonstrates how organisations can really optimise the ways in which they run their IT systems and workloads independently of the physical IT resources that are in place. Instead of having to invest in further hardware or rely on inefficient tape-based back-up, Canopius has achieved a significantly more flexible IT infrastructure, better business continuity support and at a lower cost.

This project represented both a massive time saving, as well as reducing the cost involved in the overall project. By taking data storage out of the third party's vaults and managing it themselves, Canopius only has to pay for the physical rack space in the offsite disaster recovery environment. The company expects to save around £180,000 through this implementation compared to the previous approach; the whole project should pay for itself within two years.

Double-Take® AVAILABILITY™

Double-Take® MOVE™

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