



“Our applications are at the heart of our services to clients – without them, there would be an impact on our ability to provide the high level of support that we expect of ourselves. Protecting these critical applications is therefore a core element of our IT strategy. Double-Take Availability ensures that our data is protected and up to date, based on real-time replication of any changes that take place.”

Nigel Stott, IT Director, Clarion

Business Profile

Company Name:
Clarion

Headquarters:
Leeds, UK

Industry:
Law

Business:
Clarion is a law firm based in Leeds. The company has a team of experienced, talented and committed professionals who are passionate about providing the highest possible service for businesses and individuals alike. Clarion’s approach focuses on a genuine desire to understand clients’ issues and objectives in order to provide effective, bespoke legal advice.

Business Environment:

- Provides legal services and business advice to clients across a range of issues
- Specialisms include corporate finance, mergers and acquisitions, intellectual property, dispute resolution and employment issues
- Full range of services provided for private clients including trusts, wills and wealth management

Vision Solutions Product:
Double-Take Availability

Implementation Team:
VirtualDCS

Critical issue

The law firm required a new platform for its disaster recovery requirements, ensuring that critical data was protected and that applications could be up and running as soon as possible after any failure event. Included within this was the need for a cost-effective and reliable solution that would not require too much management overhead.

Results

- Double-Take Availability provides real-time replication and protection of company data
- Ensures company can meet recovery time objective around its critical applications of less than 45 minutes, and 4–5 hours for non-critical applications
- Use of virtualisation reduces cost of implementation and flexibility

Technologies

- Double-Take Availability
- HP servers and Storage Area Network (SAN)
- VMware virtualisation platform for hosting secondary machines

Business Challenge

Clarion has a strong history in providing clear business advice and legal services to its clients, based on understanding their requirements and plans for the future. As part of this, contact with customers is vital. The law firm relies on its email systems as a communication channel with clients, as well as running specific applications for supporting its fee-earning staff in their daily work and document management.

These applications are hosted on five HP servers running Microsoft Windows Server. Applications include Microsoft Exchange, Microsoft SharePoint, Citrix and specific legal line of business applications. Protecting these applications against any risk of failure is the responsibility of the IT team, led by IT director Nigel Stott.

“Our IT systems are critical to our performance as an organisation. If the servers hosting these applications went down for any reason, then the firm’s staff would have to work around this problem. While we would still be able to support clients, it would not be to the standard that we set for ourselves internally. Our previous disaster recovery strategy relied on tape-based backups, which were adequate, but the time spent on recovery would be too long,” said Stott.

He decided to evaluate alternatives to tape for protecting the company’s applications and data. Within this he considered virtualisation as a core component of the solution. “Using virtualisation would allow us to reduce the cost of the DR project, and also be more flexible in the recovery process,” commented Stott. “Compatibility across virtual and physical servers was therefore a consideration for us when looking across the market.”



Solution

Working with VirtualDCS, a specialist in IT and cloud computing services based in Leeds, Stott and his team evaluated the solutions on the market. Double-Take Availability was chosen as it could support replication between the company's existing physical servers and the virtualisation platform that was chosen to host the secondary machines.

"Looking at the options available, Double-Take Availability impressed us with its flexibility and reliability around replication of data. The fact that we could keep our existing physical servers in place and then replicate data across to a set of secondary machines that were virtualised meant that we could keep the cost of the overall project lower," explained Stott. "The fact that data is replicated in real time was also a big selling point for us – as a law firm, each change to our data can be critical. Protecting as much of this as we can is possible with Double-Take, as we don't have any windows of downtime between snapshots, which would have been the other option to take."

The installation of the new disaster recovery platform was carried out by VirtualDCS and Clarion working together to ensure that the solution was operational as quickly as possible and working smoothly. Double-Take Availability was installed on the five primary servers, and data changes from those machines is replicated across to the DR solution. This is based on virtual machines running on VMware, and hosted on a HP Storage Area Network (SAN).

Conclusion

Clarion now has a full disk-to-disk DR platform in place that can provide fast restoration of services in the event of any incident. "The combination of Double-Take, VMware and HP was a good one for us as it meant that we can be flexible in our approach. The Double-Take solution can replicate between any platform – physical or virtual – so we can effectively future-proof our DR strategy if we ever decide to move across to a different platform as well," said Stott. "Based on Double-Take, we have an internal SLA that we can restore our critical applications to full working order within 45 minutes. For applications that are less critical, we can have them up and running in four to five hours."

About Vision Solutions

Vision Solutions, Inc. is the world's leading provider of information availability software and services for Windows, Linux, IBM Power Systems and Cloud Computing markets. Vision's trusted Double-Take®, MIMIX® and iTERA™ high availability and disaster recovery brands support business continuity, satisfy compliance requirements and increase productivity.

Affordable and easy-to-use, Vision products are backed by certified worldwide 24x7 customer support centers and a global partner network that includes IBM (NYSE:IBM), HP (NYSE:HPQ), Microsoft (NASDAQ:MSFT), VMware (NYSE:VMW) and Dell (NASDAQ:DELL).

About VirtualDCS

The founders of virtualDCS have pioneered the development of the Cloud Computing industry for over a decade. The company's approach is to work in partnership with its clients to ensure that their infrastructure is ready to exceed the service levels demanded by their business.



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- High Availability
- Disaster Recovery
- Systems and Data Management