

Case Study: Unicorn IT



Double-Take® Software Customer Profile

Company: Unicorn IT - www.unicornit.co.uk

Business: Until now only large enterprises could afford to replicate their software and data files in real time to a secure remote recovery site. Unicorn IT, a leading provider of managed IT solutions for small and medium-size businesses (SMBs), teamed up with Double-Take software, the leader in real time replication software, to provide an enterprise-level, yet affordable, business continuity service to SMBs which does just that.

Needs: To make this type of managed service a reality, Unicorn IT needed a solution that could replicate data in real time from a customer's IT systems to the infrastructure located in its data centres.

Business Continuity as a Service

Unicorn IT provides business continuity as a managed service to small and medium sized businesses with Double-Take Software

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Business Continuity the small business way

Many SMBs understand the extent of the damage that will be done to their business if, through a disaster or server failure, they lose company data or are unable to access their IT systems. However, due to the significant investment required, they are not able to procure the most effective business continuity solutions, relying instead on tape backup. Following a disaster, tapes have to be retrieved from a remote storage facility, hardware repaired or replaced, operating systems and applications reloaded and data reinstated. In addition to data lost since the last backup, the restore itself, if successful, can take days or even weeks. Not many businesses can afford to lose that much productivity.

In large organisations, disk-to-disk backup within business continuity planning is rapidly replacing tape-based backup. Data and applications from production IT systems is replicated in real time to a remote stand-by infrastructure that automatically takes over service provision in the event of a disaster. Disk-to-disk backup technology is much more effective than tape, with far less data loss and greater speed of recovery. However, For SMBs struggling to maintain one IT system, maintaining another is a step too far. As a result, enterprise level business continuity planning is generally perceived by SMBs to be unattainable.

Better Business Continuity planning for SMBs

Unicorn IT hosts and completely manages an enterprise-class IT infrastructure that enables it to provide IT as a managed service, called ThinHost, to small businesses. Recognising the problems that many SMBs experience in implementing an effective business continuity plan, Unicorn IT began considering how it could extend its managed service offering to provide the type of disaster recovery planning usually only available to large organisations.

Ricky Reemer, managing director of Unicorn IT explains further, "Making backups, storing media and recovering systems after a disaster using tape technology is one of the biggest headaches facing IT directors. What most really want is for someone to take away the responsibility of providing an effective IT continuity solution so they can focus attention on developing the core IT systems that drive their business. With our enterprise class data centre infrastructure, we recognised we were well placed to develop a service that could enable an SMB's IT service to continue, almost unaffected, through any disaster."

To make this type of managed service a reality, Unicorn IT needed a solution that could replicate data in real time from a customer's IT systems to the infrastructure located in its data centres. In the event of a disaster, Unicorn IT would then be able to rapidly transition the delivery of IT services away from the failed in-house systems to fully managed replacements containing an up to date copy of the customer's data. Where the traditional disaster recovery model relies on replacing equipment and rebuilding networks, the proposed service would use enterprise level infrastructure to deliver the network back to the business through a secure Internet channel.

Making Business Continuity as a Service work

Double-Take Software provides software solutions that replicate data from production to stand-by servers over any physical distance. In the event that a disaster causes production systems to fail, the solution automatically routes delivery of IT services to the stand-by servers, enabling users to carry on working with little or no interruption to productivity. Double-Take Software provides a continuity solution that more than satisfies most organisation's data protection and recovery goals, as in the event of disaster little or no data is lost and service are up and running usually within seconds.

Ricky Reemer commented, "Having used Double-Take to replicate data between facilities in our own business continuity plans, we realised the solution could be perfect to enable business continuity as a service. We began discussing with Double-Take Software how we could use its solution to enable a commercial service. We learnt that Double-Take had all the functionality in place and a licensing model that made the service cost effective for end-users at the same time as making sense for our business. As a result, we were quickly able to offer the service, which we have called 'Continue', to our SMB clients."

"When a customer signs up to Continue, we use Double-Take to continuously replicate their data to our data centre. We provide and manage all the infrastructure required to host a real time copy of a customer's IT systems. In the event of a disaster at their site, they are able to access all of the IT services that have been affected through a secure Internet connection. A key benefit of this arrangement is that following a disaster which completely destroys the original site, rather than being forced to work from an emergency site some distance from the original, users can work from anywhere that has an internet connection, be that an alternative local site or from home."

"Continue provides a true IT business continuity solution but without the client having to plan, develop and heavily invest in maintaining it. Whereas traditional disaster recovery solutions rely on rebuilding network loan equipment at emergency sites, we are able to show the exact same files or emails that were being worked on moments before the disaster struck."

Through business continuity as a service provided by Unicorn IT and enabled through Double-Take, there is no need for a small business to recover from a disaster in the traditional sense. Instead, small businesses are able to transform a potentially business breaking disaster into, at worst, a temporary and minor inconvenience. Continuity of IT is so seamless that the customers and partners of Unicorn IT's clients may be unaware that any issue had occurred.

Business Continuity as a Service in Action

Nina Bishop, Operations manager at London-based consumer PR agency, Phipps PR, has just signed up to the Continue service from Unicorn IT. "Following an IT review, we realised that a serious network failure or other disaster could seriously impact our business, as attempts to restore from our existing backup could take several days. That amount of downtime is unacceptable to us, and our clients, but the options available to resolve the problem were somewhat daunting and hugely expensive. When we heard of the Continue service from Unicorn IT, we realised that it solved our problem well within budget and without having to take on extra management overheads."

Future growth of Business Continuity as a Service

Ricky Reemer concluded, "There is massive change happening within the market for IT services. Businesses are increasingly open to obtaining computing services, as they need them, through the Internet rather than by managing the infrastructure themselves. Unicorn IT has utilised the Double-Take solution to offer a truly unique business continuity solution that has tangible, real world benefits to our current and prospective customers."

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 SMEs to the Fortune 500. Information about Double-Take Software's products and services can be found at www.doubletake.com.

This release includes forward-looking statements intended to qualify for the safe harbor from liability established by the Private Securities Litigation Reform Act of 1995. These forward-looking statements generally can be identified by phrases that say Double-Take or its management "believes," "expects," "anticipates," "foresees," "forecasts," "estimates" or other words or phrases of similar import. Similarly, statements in this release that describe the Company's business strategy, outlook, objectives, plans, intentions or goals also are forward-looking statements. All forward-looking statements are inherently speculative, and are subject to risks and uncertainties that could cause actual results to differ materially from those anticipated in forward-looking statements. These risks and uncertainties include those set forth from time to time in our filings with the Securities and Exchange Commission. We are under no obligation, and do not undertake any duty, to update these forward looking statements statements at any time.

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