CONTINUITY
SOFTWARE

Banking Case Study

How one of the world's largest banks ensures 24x7 business continuity and service availability

Company

One of the US top five banks, serving millions of consumer and business customers in over 50 countries.

The IT Environment

With over 50,000 physical servers, a growing private cloud environment (VMware vSphere, Microsoft HyperV, IBM PowerVM), and hundreds of storage arrays (EMC Symmetrix, HDS, netApp), managing IT operations at this large bank is no small feat.

More than 1,600 IT engineers in over a dozen datacenters worldwide work closely with 3rd party partners and vendors to meet the bank's service availability goals.

BENEFITS AT A GLANCE

- ✓ **70% reduction in downtime and data loss risks**

- ✓ **50% decrease in time spent on resolving emergency issues**

- ✓ **Shorter and more successful DR tests**

- ✓ **Tighter collaboration across IT domains and teams**

Challenges

With millions of customers accessing the bank systems daily at ATMs, branches, online, and through multiple call centers, any downtime or service disruptions are practically unacceptable to the bank. With a growing portion of customers relying on online and mobile banking, 24/7 service reliability has become more critical than ever.

To address these needs, major efforts and resources have been directed towards the creation of a robust high availability and disaster recovery infrastructure.

In this complex infrastructure comprising multiple datacenters, configuration changes are undertaken daily by different groups in various parts of the environment. While each team was making an effort to apply best practices in its own domain, there was no visibility to the implications and risks introduced by such modifications on the overall stability, service availability, and DR readiness of critical systems.

As the IT environment has grown in size and complexity, keeping production high availability and disaster recovery systems in complete sync across IT teams and domains (e.g., server, storage, databases and virtualization) has become an increasing challenge.

Moreover, management was lacking visibility into how well the organization was keeping up with established Service Level Agreements (SLA's) for availability (RTO), data protection (RPO), and retention objectives.

In Search of a Solution

While overall service performance of the bank has been satisfactory, minor incidents over a several month period have alerted the bank's IT stewards to hidden vulnerabilities and the lack of visibility to impending downtime and data loss risks.

Although the bank managed to escape these incidents without a major service impact, other banks were not so lucky. Publicized outages at major financial institutions around the world caught the attention of senior management. They were determined to avoid seeing their bank suffer similar embarrassment and dire financial consequences.

Following management's directive, a committee was put in place to define the requirements for a solution:

- ❖ Proactively detect risks introduced by configuration changes across the entire datacenter and DR environments
- ❖ Analyze the potential impact of such risks on service availability levels and disaster recovery readiness
- ❖ Help the relevant teams pinpoint the source of each risk identified
- ❖ Provide management with a consolidated view of downtime and data loss risks across the entire environment
- ❖ Measure adherence to availability and data recovery SLA's (RPO, RTO, redundancy, DR capacity)
- ❖ Simplify internal and regulatory compliance reporting
- ❖ Improve DR capacity management and planning

In addition, the IT team mandated the solution must operate in a non-intrusive manner (preferably agentless) and integrate with the service management system used by the organization.

Getting a Solution in Place

Following an extensive search, the bank's team identified Continuity Software's AvailabilityGuard as the preferred solution for protecting the bank against service availability risks. The fact that AvailabilityGuard was already used by other large financial institutions gave the team an added measure of confidence in the decision.

To ensure the proper process was put in place, the initial implementation was limited to 1,000 servers. A joint committee with members from the Business Continuity and IT Operations groups was established. Over the first six months of operating the system, the committee established and documented procedures for problem identification, management reporting, and continuous improvement.

The flexibility of the AvailabilityGuard solution allowed the bank to seamlessly adapt the solution to support the availability assurance processes established by the organization, including:

- ❖ Daily scan of the IT infrastructure
- ❖ Automated routing of critical issues to the enterprise IT incident management system, ensuring that risks are addressed immediately as they are uncovered
- ❖ Weekly, monthly, and quarterly health and SLA compliance scores for each IT domain and business service delivered to management as well as internal and external auditors

One year following the initial implementation, AvailabilityGuard is now used to monitor all Tier One and Tier Two business services, encompassing over 6,000 servers.

Results

Since the bank has implemented the AvailabilityGuard solution, downtime and data loss risks have decreased by over 70%.

AvailabilityGuard has also been helping the bank break down many of the long-standing IT silos. AvailabilityGuard provides a unified platform that detects availability risks across all IT domains, enabling collaboration among the various teams. And since most issues are identified and resolved before they impact service availability, there is a 50% decrease in time spent on resolving emergency issues.

With AvailabilityGuard well-integrated into the bank's IT infrastructure and processes, planning for the next phase of implementation is underway, expanding the coverage of AvailabilityGuard to include all production and DR systems.

About Continuity Software

Continuity Software is a leading provider of Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery Risk Management solutions.

The AvailabilityGuard software helps many of the world's largest finance, telco, utilities, and other organizations mitigate downtime and data loss risks by monitoring production and remote replication environments to detect hidden vulnerabilities and gaps.

With AvailabilityGuard, you will be confident your service availability and data protection goals can be met on a consistent basis.

For more information

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