



Buyer Case Study

BBVA Implements Continuity Software's AvailabilityGuard to Gain Improved Control Over its DR/HA Environment

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IDC OPINION

Disaster recovery (DR) and high availability (HA) are top priorities for organizations of all sizes. Driven by the need to ensure business continuity and comply with data protection policies and regulatory requirements, DR/HA is a major area of IT spending. However, in light of the dynamic nature of data center configuration changes and the complexity of DR implementations, it becomes increasingly difficult to make sure that critical data and business processes are successfully recoverable at all times.

As one of the largest financial institutions in the world, BBVA is dealing with an IT infrastructure that is constantly growing in size and diversity. In accordance, BBVA has been faced with the challenge of effectively controlling its DR/HA environment while ensuring consistent readiness. To address this issue, among other initiatives, the company chose Continuity Software's AvailabilityGuard to automate DR/HA management processes and gain immediate visibility into configuration gaps between primary production and disaster recovery sites. As a result, BBVA has been able to improve operational efficiency and remove one of the major and most common causes for DR and availability failures - the lack of timely identification of impending risks.

IN THIS BUYER CASE STUDY

This case study discusses BBVA's use of Continuity Software's AvailabilityGuard to address DR/HA risks. It analyzes BBVA's business continuity challenges and how AvailabilityGuard helped tackle them while enabling a proactive approach for identifying and fixing problems before they escalate and disrupt critical, revenue generating services.

SITUATION OVERVIEW

Organization Overview

Headquartered in Spain, BBVA is a global provider of financial and non-financial products and services for individual and corporate customers. Founded in 1857, the group employs more than 110,000 people in 32 countries around the world and 7,457 branches, and has more than 50 million customers and 900,000 shareholders. It is the 15th largest U.S. commercial bank, and has a strong presence in Europe as well as in emerging markets such as Latin America, China and Turkey. In 2011, BBVA had €4.01 billion in net attributable profit and €20.5 in gross income.

BBVA is globally recognized as one of the most technologically advanced financial institutions. In 2011, it spent €2.15 billion on ICT, out of which over 40% was dedicated to investment in new technologies, as part of BBVA's strategy of transforming its business model and improving customer experience by making its services accessible from anywhere at any time. Specifically, the company is focused on the development of non-branch or alternative channels such as the Internet and smartphones as a main competitive advantage.

BBVA is also making significant investments in cloud, mobile and social technologies to improve internal collaboration and communication. For example, it has recently signed a major agreement with Google to start using Google Apps (Google Docs, Sites, Mail, and Calendar). The deal, the biggest Google Apps enterprise contract so far, is aimed at helping BBVA's employees collaborate more easily, regardless of location.

Challenges and Solution

The transformation of BBVA's IT infrastructure to support the group's business objectives has had a substantial impact on its business continuity plan. BBVA is using a DR/HA architecture based on the replication of critical data and availability of servers shared with other services. Due to the growing diversity and number of systems encompassed by the DR/HA strategy, the group has been faced with the need to optimize the process of managing service continuity, while ensuring compliance with disaster recovery objectives driven by internal policies and regulatory requirements. In particular, BBVA was looking for efficient ways to proactively detect and mitigate risks of unprotected components, missing replication, and recovery SLA breaches such as RPO and RTO violations. The challenge was further compounded by BBVA's increasing reliance on its IT infrastructure to support business-critical, customer facing services, and the rapid pace of change in this dynamic environment.

To address its growing DR/HA needs, BBVA looked for solutions to simplify and automate the management, analysis, planning, implementation, and maintenance of recovery plans, as well as the periodic tests of the systems that are within the functions of "BRS" (Backup and Recovery Strategies).

Continuity Software's AvailabilityGuard, which is designed for ensuring business continuity and mitigating data protection, recovery and availability risks, was among the solutions reviewed by BBVA. The product detects data protection vulnerabilities and configuration gaps and alerts users to potential risks before they impact critical business services.

AvailabilityGuard uses an agentless technology to scan the production and replication infrastructures to collect configuration data from key IT assets, and calculate dependencies and relationships between applications, databases, file systems, servers, storage volumes and replicas. It then searches through the results for known gaps and vulnerabilities. When potential data protection, availability, or disaster recovery risks are detected, a ticket containing details regarding the severity of the problem and how to resolve it is automatically issued.

In addition, AvailabilityGuard can be used for optimization purposes such as detecting under/over utilized assets, allowing organizations to fine-tune resources. Reporting and analytic capabilities are also provided to enable further drill-down into the IT infrastructure configuration status, as well as into previously discovered data protection and disaster recovery gaps. Customers can use the product to produce audit reports that include configuration changes and trend analysis as well as business services recoverability and SLA compliance status.

According to Antonio Castillo, who is responsible for back-up and recovery strategies for BBVA across Europe, an initial scan performed using AvailabilityGuard yielded significant results. "The pilot with AvailabilityGuard was very satisfactory, since we were able to identify the possible risks in our current DR/HA strategy; making it easier for us to anticipate them and establish proactive measures prior to contingency tests and simulations". Following the successful pilot, BBVA decided to deploy AvailabilityGuard across all critical servers, which are now scanned on a regular basis. In addition, alerts are reviewed daily by BBVA to proactively handle gaps, and the product's reporting and visualization features are used to facilitate daily tasks such as planning, documentation, optimization and others.

Results

By implementing AvailabilityGuard, BBVA has been able to automate and streamline processes and gain improved control over its DR/HA environment. In addition to addressing BBVA's operational need to automate the management of DR/HA tasks and ensure uptime of critical systems, the deployment of AvailabilityGuard has consequently resulted in other key benefits. Most notably, it enabled the group to optimize processes and reduce associated costs, for example by shortening testing cycles and time spent on service calls, and freeing IT staff to focus on more value-added activities. Furthermore, AvailabilityGuard enables BBVA to optimize resource utilization in periodic contingency tests.

According to BBVA, the main advantages of using AvailabilityGuard can be summarized as follows:

- **Proactive detection of infrastructure vulnerabilities.** Improved visibility of systems, components and their interdependencies, which helps anticipate possible risks that can occur in DR/HA configurations.
- **Optimization of recovery plans and testing.** Improved design and implementation of the recovery plans, as well as allowing for the simulation of tests with a greater frequency (weekly, daily), without the need to deploy all of the resources to carry these out.
- **Risk assessment.** Improved predictability of business impact to services and systems that can be affected by downtime or data loss vulnerabilities.

ESSENTIAL GUIDANCE

Advice for End Users

Large companies are spending millions of dollars on their DR/HA infrastructure to ensure business continuity in the event of various scenarios. Nevertheless, many of these organizations have limited visibility into data protection gaps and configuration vulnerabilities between the primary production site and the disaster recovery site, especially in dynamic IT environments where configuration changes occur frequently. As a result, organizations do not know for sure that their critical systems will continue to operate properly in case of a disaster.

The BBVA example clearly illustrates the need to identify data protection gaps. In recent years, the company has been expanding its IT infrastructure to support its business expansion plans. In light of the increased complexity introduced by this move, BBVA has been dealing with the challenge to identify problems before they escalate into system failures or downtime and impact its business continuity. By using Continuity Software's AvailabilityGuard, BBVA has been able to take a proactive, automatic approach for identifying and fixing problems and thus improve the availability and recoverability of critical business systems.

LEARN MORE

Related Research

- *Worldwide Business Continuity 2011-2015 Forecast: A Multidimensional IT Market Influenced by Increased Corporate Reliance on IT Systems, Applications, and Data* (IDC #230483, September 2011)
- *The State of Business Continuity in End-User Environments in 2011* (IDC #227783, April 2011)

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