

Enterprise Disaster Recovery: What Lies Ahead?

As one of the fastest growing markets in IT, Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS) has become a market of choice for many new vendors and for a good reason too. Many businesses continue to fall into the same DR traps as their predecessors as shown in a recent survey by Unitrends which indicated that over two-thirds of businesses that had DR environments tested their environment only once a year or not at all.

A lack of regular testing can result in unpleasant surprises and failed recovery points during a disaster. As a result, most businesses take much longer to recover than their requirements dictate. Currently, only about two percent of businesses were able to recover from a downtime event in less than one hour according to a recent survey.

DRaaS will evolve in 2017 to ensure that business continuity remains intact in the event of disasters or malware attack.

New Requirements, New Thinking

Businesses and its stakeholders expect to be able to do business 24/7, and there is no tolerance for downtime in today's always on, highly connected world. The impact of downtime and how it affects a business' bottom line and its reputation can have serious repercussions or actually put lives at risk.

But the number of potential downtime events and causes of disasters are increasing. No longer are we only concerned with equipment failure, local disasters like fires and floods. 2016 has become the year of ransomware, with no signs of criminal encryption threats slowing. Once files are encrypted, there are only two choices: to restore from backup or pay up with no guarantee of getting any data back.

In 2017, we will hit the point where IT will think differently about data backup and disaster recovery. Business will begin to shift their thinking from recovery to continuity, from rapid response to resiliency and from data and application recovery to whole business continuity. This shift will also result in new requirements and new layers of technology in disaster-recovery solutions.

Make Way for the New World DR

The old world of DR was time-consuming and expensive; with no SLAs or recovery guarantees and manual-based DR testing that was frequently skipped. In 2017, new DR and business-continuity solutions will deliver one-hour SLAs for an entire business, automate DR testing for 100 percent confidence and provide recovery guarantees that can be executed frequently without requiring IT cycles.

New disaster recovery and DRaaS solutions will continue to become far easier for IT to use and trust and will appeal to IT's mantra of "less is more." This is particularly important as budgets and resources in IT will remain flat for most businesses, yet they will expect IT to deliver more projects and handle more systems and data than ever before. This means backup, DR and business continuity must not distract from IT's core focus of helping the business. Business continuity/DR must deliver more uptime, more confidence, and greater flexibility without consuming large amounts of IT cycles; otherwise, for many businesses, DR will continue to be unreliable when it matters most during a disaster.

Solutions that use high levels of automation – with radically easy-to-use interfaces and the ability to certify recovery — will become the new standard. These capabilities will allow IT to focus on other things while still having 100 percent confidence in their ability to recover at the point of a disaster.

Recovery assurance technology is a key requirement for delivering this level of confidence. Recovery assurance technology can automatically test DR environments and deliver reports to IT assuring that recovery point objectives (RPO) and recovery time objectives (RTO) are actually being met in their environment. Recovery assurance spins up applications in a sandbox, validates application operation of even complex N-tier applications that span multiple VMs, and in stores, certify recovery states for 100 percent guarantee of recoverability. These automated tests and reports can be run as frequently as IT requires thereby limiting the challenge of infrequent testing.

Business continuity also requires rock solid SLAs from DRaaS vendors, but early DR-as-a-Service vendors frequently had no or vaguely worded SLAs. In 2017, businesses will demand clearly defined SLAs to remove any doubts regarding how long it will take for them to recover.

DRaaS is becoming mainstream. But for it to reach its full potential, it must be able to give IT professionals greater confidence in their ability to restore business continuity without burdening them with more work. The continuing evolution of Disaster Recovery as a Service will focus on ease of use, automated recovery assurance technology and rock-solid SLAs in 2017, allowing IT to think beyond recovery and focus more on ensuring business continuity.

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