Charities Aid Foundation

New disaster recovery solution with off-site replication significantly reduces recovery time.

CUSTOMER SUCCESS STORY

AT A GLANCE:

Challenges:

> Fragmented IT infrastructure with severe cost constraints

> FSA and PCI-DSS regulatory compliance

Solution:

> VMware virtualised HP servers and HP ThinPro desktop clients

> Storage virtualised with Hitachi SAN, FalconStor and Barracuda.

> RES Workspace & Automation Manager, Microsoft App-V and Windows 2008 RDS

Benefits:

> Off-site data replications resulted in a significant reduction in RTO

> Smarter disaster recovery with much improved data handling

> Fully FSA and PCI-DSS compliant

New disaster recovery solution with offsite replication significantly reduces recovery time

The Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) is a charity dedicated to helping other charities by working with donors, companies and charities to encourage and facilitate a culture of giving.

CAF does this by offering products and services that make giving easier, tax efficient and help charities to make the most of donations via its banking and fundraising support services. Everyday CAF distributes more than a million pounds worth of donations to charities.

The organisation is dependent on a good IT infrastructure to deliver these services.

CAF Charities Aid Foundation

Challenges

CAF needs to maximise and justify every penny it spends. It cannot afford to take risks with new technology. The result is that much of the CAF computing infrastructure has evolved organically over many years. It now needed updating, especially from a disaster recovery (DR) perspective.

As CAF is regulated by the Financial Services Authority compliance is a top priority. It also needs to conform to the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS).

These two challenges came together as a pressing need to update and improve information management. This made the decision to update and rationalise data recovery – at the lowest possible cost – simple and inevitable. CAF's existing DR processes needed upgrading to accommodate the growth of the business and the way that its online and direct business had expanded in recent years.

"An organisation's systems and IT infrastructure is key to FSA compliance. As a financial services organisation, we need to ensure that our operation is not subject to single points of failure."

- Mark Sykes, IS Strategy Board, CAF

Solution

Mark Sykes, a member of the CAF IS Strategy Board, knew what he wanted. He talked to a number of different suppliers about the disaster recovery issue. He also reviewed different technologies and decided, since the servers were already being virtualised with VMware, to include storage virtualisation. OISG Group was the only supplier with the complete skill set and calibre of staff he was seeking.

OISG Group updated CAF's disaster recovery capabilities by installing disk replication to a remote site. This simultaneously increased its data protection and decreased data recovery timescales. The OISG Group team also installed storage virtualisation and optimised the existing server virtualisation with the implementation of VMware Site Recovery Manager. Storage virtualisation offers far greater flexibility and ease when moving data around. In CAF's case, it now had a single easy-to-use

interface rather than having to swap between two or three separate proprietary storage systems.

The backend systems for disaster recovery include FalconStor for the storage virtualisation and data management, Hitachi SAN, and HP virtualised servers using VMware. Frontend systems for disaster recovery and remote desktops include Barracuda load balancers, HP servers, RES Workspace and Automation Manager, Microsoft App-V, and Windows 2008 Remote Desktop Services. Further work is continuing to refresh CAF's desktop infrastructure with HP ThinPro clients.

It was the close and flexible working relationship with the OISG Group team that stood out in Mark's view. CAF relies on investment income. In such economically turbulent times this meant that it had to be 'fairly agile' in changing timelines and amending project scope. OISG Group had to be equally agile in adapting to and accommodating those changes.

> "There was no question about who we would use on this major project."
>
> *- Mark Sykes, IS Strategy Board, CAF*

Benefits

One of the benefits in working with OISG Group has been the relationship itself. The teams in the two companies rapidly established a rapport and worked closely together. OISG Group was pro-active in offering advice and support where it felt necessary. It was this relationship that allowed the project 'agility' that was vital for CAF.

This relationship led to the two greatest technical benefits: improved disaster recovery, and FSA compliance in its improved handling of data. An effective disaster recovery capability is essential for any business, but an absolute requirement for an FSA regulated organisation. Systems failure, for whatever reason, would lead to customers' inability to access their accounts. If that happened for anything other than the briefest of periods it could have a significant impact to customer confidence which would be catastrophic for CAF. Disc replication to a remote site provides both data assurance and an acceptable recovery time objective.

Internal storage virtualisation improves both flexibility and agility in data storage, offering the potential for future storage savings by maximising the use of existing devices.

"The biggest benefit is the off-site replication capability which will allow us to significantly reduce the RTO (recovery time objective) for our DR."

"The optimised servers and storage virtualisation along with disc replication, have allowed us to be much smarter around disaster recovery."

"I wouldn't hesitate in recommending OISG Group. Its capability instils confidence."

- Mark Sykes, IS Strategy Board, CAF

OISG Group

Formed in 2004, OISG Group has grown year on year into the UK's foremost technology partner. We specialise in the complete service, from initial procurement of IT to the design, implementation and optimisation of cutting edge solutions to all requirements. Working closely with both vendors and clients, we bring unparalleled experience to all of our solutions – product knowledge and expertise are our keywords, service is everything is our ethos.

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