

Business Continuity & Data Recovery

Considering the severe consequences of data loss, it is hard to believe that many businesses do not do more to protect their data. Gartner studies indicate fewer than 25 percent of Global 2000 enterprises have invested in comprehensive business continuity management. Further, only 50 percent have fully tested disaster recovery plans. That's a very high-risk situation for many companies. As the volume of business data grows daily so does the risk inherent in doing without a data protection plan.

Insurance companies, as well as regulators, are scrutinizing their clients' data protection policies. Those firms whose data is deemed at higher risk will pay higher premiums, since loss of data translates into huge business losses. To mitigate their own risk, companies should consider suppliers' data protection policies as well. If a supplier loses data, those who are closely linked could incur losses.

Lost Data Means Lost Business

Data protection is, first and foremost, a business issue that demands a business solution. It is a component of business continuity, an umbrella term that encompasses all the activities involved in planning for and recovery from external and

internal events

The foundation for data protection is prioritizing data according to its value and providing an appropriate level of protection. Two key metrics describe the priority assigned to different classes of data: RTO and RPO. RTO stands for Recovery Time Objective, the amount of time (in hours or days) a business can afford to be down in the event of an outage. RPO stands for Recovery Point Objective, the age of the data you can restore to after an outage.

Understanding RTO and RPO enables a business to balance the amount of down-time it can endure with the amount of data loss it can endure. The challenge is to balance RTO and RPO with the costs of attaining them. Shorter recovery times and recovery points translate into higher costs.

For example, a financial services firm calculated it earned revenues of US\$500,000 per hour. The company developed a data protection solution that would prevent losses of US\$1 million. Therefore, it chose a solution



with a two-hour RTO (US\$500,000 per hour x 2 hours).

A business continuity & data recovery program can not overcome every possible risk a business will encounter but it can mitigate the effects of the most common occurrences. Companies must plan for rapid recovery following data loss and downtime due to human error, sabotage, even acts of nature such as HURRICANES.

They must be in compliance with applicable regulations and for many industries that means a data recovery program must be in place. In addition, CEOs and boards must protect themselves from liabilities resulting from data loss. Finally, a solid data recovery program should be a standard business practice, one to be implemented as soon as possible.

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