xenos

Geminare Provides Guaranteed Business Continuity for Xenos, with Uninterrupted Access to All Critical Data and Applications in the Event of an Outage.

Business

Headquartered in Toronto, Canada Xenos has provided high-performance data and document management solutions to global Fortune 1000 companies for more than 25 years. Xenos technology repurposes, integrates with and extends existing technology infrastructure and business applications, empowering organizations to adapt information to changing market demands. Xenos also improves operational efficiency, enhances business processes, reduces risk for compliance management and increases employee productivity with lowered total cost of ownership both for the enterprise and for its customers.

> "Our customers have high service expectations of us, and since our operations span many different time zones, we are required to provide guaranteed services, around the clock."
>
> *Raymond Cheong*
> *Director, Information systems*
> *Xenos Group inc.*

Challenge

Volume of Data Outstripped Back-up Capabilities

Compliance and cost became major issues for Xenos as the company's data sets became larger and larger. Tape back-up technology failed to keep pace with the sheer volume of data, with the result that weekend back-ups extended into the next week, with no guarantee that the process was current.

"We were working around the clock, all through the week and weekend as well," explains Raymond Cheong, Director of Information Systems at Xenos. "We were never sure if we were truly compliant because people continued to work with data, even during the back-up window."

Lengthy Recovery Time After an Outage

Another concern was the threat of an outage. Although Xenos is a world leader in data and document management, IT resources are lean. The time and infrastructure required to test recovery capabilities on a continuous basis were simply not there.

"What risk are you willing to take as a company?" said Cheong. "At this time, on this continent, given scenarios like 9/11, blackouts, and SOX – the consequences of non-compliance are severe. With the number of off-site tapes we had, could we recover in a timely manner? We determined that we could not."

Considerations

Initially, Xenos looked at expanding current tape back-up capabilities. "We considered adding more tape machines to manage the back-up, but there were so many costs in terms of people and processes, and there was no guarantee that more tape machines would bring about a faster recovery in the case of an outage," said Cheong.

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To speed customer response time during testing and proof of concept, Xenos had recently moved to a virtual environment, which further complicated the search for a Disaster Recovery solution. VMWare offered a distinct advantage in dealing with customer requests for modifications, but added a layer of complexity to the recovery challenge. Tape back-up could not support the newly virtualized environment.

"Now it wasn't just about tape back-ups, it was about backing up a virtual environment, and recovering a virtual environment on demand," said Cheong. "It was essential to look at Disaster Recovery in that context."

Uninterrupted communication with clients was also essential, and so Email and Blackberry service were considered critical. The company needed to demonstrate that in an outage email and Blackberry service could be restored within acceptable timeframes. Security as it relates to communication was also important. With sixty percent of the company's intellectual property embedded in email, encryption was mandatory. "We knew that whatever vendor we chose would need to be SAS 70 compliant – a level of security that meets our customers' requirements," said Cheong.

After investigating several in-house technology solutions, Xenos determined that a monthly managed service was a more suitable option than purchasing, implementing, and managing an internal solution. To meet its new and expanding Business Continuity requirements, Xenos selected Toronto-based Geminare In., a leading provider of host-based continuity services for the SMB market. The service facilitates real-time server replication with automatic failover, immediate remote operational capability with complete data protection.

ROI

Seamless Email and Blackberry Service

"We'd had email and Blackberry outages in the past with four or five days to recover," said Cheong. "Think of the credibility loss. You can't even quantify it. Now, once an outage is declared, we can continue to log onto email as though nothing has happened. Changes are replicated on an ongoing basis so our data is always current. And, once the infrastructure is repaired, it takes just 30 minutes to failback to our production server. Meanwhile, our users aren't even aware an outage has occurred."

Reduced Monitoring, Maintenance and Support Costs

The company has also realized greater operational efficiency and significant cost savings by moving to a managed service model. "There's a cost factor around the monitoring, maintenance and support of any internal solution you put in place. There are a lot people, processes, and technologies required to manage that internally. With Geminare, it can all be managed with just one phone call."

Improved Customer Service

Outsourcing has freed Cheong's team to focus on strategic projects in line with the company's wider business objectives. "Our guys can now focus on key operational issues – our customers and the solutions we're providing for them can be delivered in a timely manner without distractions due to an outage caused by a blackout, virus, or new release," said Cheong. "We have the confidence to initiate a recovery – even remotely from home if we have to."

Scalability Without Added Investment

Cheong describes the service as a "strategic pillar" for the company, highlighting the advantage of a solution that can be scaled out over time without increasing the cost of overhead on the physical building. "From a disaster recovery perspective it makes sense for a company our size to be using an outsourced, on-demand service like this," concludes Cheong. "With it, we are truly maximizing our investors' stake in the company, and using our current assets to the best of our ability, without having to spend more."