

WHAT TO LOOK FOR IN A

BACKUP SOLUTION TO DELIVER IMPROVED BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Business continuity is the ability to keep daily operations running—even in the midst of a natural, man-made or technical disaster. It isn't just about data backup, though; it's a holistic practice that also addresses ready access to backups and timely restorations—and all of the potential obstacles you might encounter in the process.

The costs and consequences of downtime are generally measured in two ways: How much time you can afford to lose (the Recovery Time Objective, or RTO), and how much data you can afford to lose (the Recovery Point Objective, or RPO). In order to be effective, a business continuity plan must establish an acceptable RTO and RPO for the business and engage a backup and recovery solution that can achieve both in the event of a disaster or outage.

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How Much Data Can You Afford to Lose?

A successful plan eliminates or minimizes the amount of data a business would lose in a disaster or outage. Consider the consequences of losing all of the data your employees and customers generate in just one day. If it's possible at all, how long would it take to re-create critical data generated by sales, customer service, marketing, human resources, manufacturing and other internal departments? How much would it cost your organization to lose a day's worth of orders and emails? How much will it cost for employees to attempt to re-create lost data? Costs range from thousands to millions of dollars per hour and can be compounded by fines for violating service-level agreements and compliance regulations. An effective plan that will protect the business must have a method of capturing data at regular intervals that meet the organization's RPO.

How Much Time Can You Afford to Lose?

A successful plan not only eliminates or minimizes the amount of data a business would lose in a disaster, but it also minimizes or eliminates the amount of time it takes to get systems up and running

again. When considering how much downtime would cost your business, consider the financial impact of lost customer connections and employee productivity. How many sales will you lose in an hour or a day if your systems are down? How many customers will simply turn to a competitor? What is the hourly or daily cost of lost labor? What are the overtime costs for IT administrators who must work through the night to restore systems?

Consider the impact of negative press, negative social media chatter, employee frustration, lost consumer confidence, reputation damage and the potential impact to stock price.

In order to minimize downtime and hit the organization's RTO, a business continuity plan must incorporate a comprehensive backup strategy that protects entire workstations and servers. This is best achieved through image captures that include all data, applications and operating systems.

A holistic plan must also feature fast, full restoration capabilities, including the ability to restore images and files to different hardware or bare metal in case the original hardware is destroyed or damaged beyond repair. Fast recovery also depends on having options for storage and restoration, including the ability for instant local and off-site virtualization. It also offers the ability to utilize a hybrid cloud-based model to store entire systems locally and off-site. These options give administrators the ability to manage backup and recovery remotely from a central or alternate location

in case a branch office is affected or the central office isn't accessible. Without the ability to manage branch offices from a central location, administrators have to spend time in transit or rely on non-technical staff to attempt to perform restorations. These options also give the business the ability to adapt replication and storage strategy and infrastructure to their changing needs.

Finally, the restoration process is only as reliable as the last test, so administrators must be able to test backups regularly in order to ensure the viability of files and images—otherwise they risk losing time troubleshooting failed restorations.

Indirect Costs of Downtime and Data Loss

Of course, RTO and RPO aren't the only ways of measuring the consequences of downtime. In today's always-open global market, consumers and employees have very little tolerance for downtime and data loss. The fact is, at some point all businesses will encounter the threat of downtime or data loss due to disaster or human error. While the direct costs of downtime are relatively easy to quantify, the indirect costs can be harder to establish but just as devastating to the business. As you build a case for a comprehensive business continuity plan, consider the impact of negative press, negative social media chatter, employee frustration, lost consumer confidence, reputation damage and the potential impact to stock price.

Business continuity isn't just about data backup, though; it's a holistic practice that also addresses ready access to backups and timely restorations.

What to Look for in a Holistic Backup Solution

It's easy to see how quickly downtime and data loss can ruin a business. A holistic backup solution protects the business from the potentially devastating consequences of small and large disasters, no matter the cause. A comprehensive solution minimizes data loss by capturing entire images of data, applications and operating systems on all workstations and servers at regular intervals that meet the organization's Recovery Point Objective. A strategic plan also minimizes downtime by giving IT administrators storage and restoration options that enable them to manage backup and restoration from a central location. These options also enable full restores to different hardware or even bare metal.

When an organization has access to all of its data and can quickly restore that data plus applications and operating systems, it has a business continuity plan that provides a competitive edge, and protects all customers and shareholders—no matter what.

After all, if the backup software only captures data, administrators can spend days or even weeks reinstalling applications and operating systems on servers and individual workstations.

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