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Mark Rooney
Systems Administrator
First Scottish

First Scottish has deployed a hybrid cloud solution based on Fujitsu servers and storage to provide reliable disaster recovery capability in the event of failure.

At a glance

Country: United Kingdom
Industry: Legal Services
Founded: 1988
Employees: 100
Website: www.firstscottish.com

Challenge

First Scottish's disaster recovery platform was reaching end of life and no longer fit for purpose. They wanted to find a flexible, reliable and cost-effective replacement that would increase availability and de-risk the company in the event of hardware failure.

Solution

The company worked with AAG Systems and Fujitsu to implement a hybrid cloud solution encompassing Veeam and VMware running on Fujitsu servers and storage.

Benefit

- In the event of catastrophic failure, seamless failover ensures First Scottish can be back up and running in hours rather than weeks
- Regular four-hourly replications combined with a tiered backup approach mean recovery points are more recent and less data is potentially lost
- TCO is five times lower utilising a Hybrid-Cloud over alternative approaches such as replicating the entire hardware environment or utilising a complete cloud solution

Customer

Based in Fife, First Scottish provides fast and accurate searches and reports for solicitors, estate agents, financial institutions and local authorities. The company also offers document management solutions to help streamline processes, reduce storage costs and increase accessibility to critical business information.

Products and services

- 1 x FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS DX100
- 2 x FUJITSU Server PRIMERGY RX2540

Challenge

First Scottish implemented a backup and disaster recovery solution to mitigate against unexpected failure and catastrophe. This consisted of network attached storage in its data centre which saved daily changes overnight and performed a copy of the company's complete data every weekend. However, the hardware was five years old and reaching end of life; it was also time-consuming and, because it was located in the data centre, represented significant risk in the event of failure.

"Having our disaster recovery in the same place as our primary infrastructure obviously made little sense because fire or flooding would have destroyed everything regardless," explains Mark Rooney, Systems Administrator, First Scottish. "Statistics show that 80 per cent of businesses that suffer a major catastrophe never recover, so we wanted to introduce a more robust and resilient approach to keeping our data and applications safe."

First Scottish asked IT partner AAG Systems for advice on how best to upgrade its backup and disaster recovery platform. The key criteria the company outlined included cost, performance, scalability and reliability. AAG Systems recommended a hybrid approach to IT: a cloud computing environment which uses a blend of onsite private cloud and third-party, public cloud services with orchestration between the two platforms.

"We wanted a faster, more flexible solution that would allow us to backup regularly during the day rather than overnight while providing peace of mind concerning availability and the hybrid cloud fit the bill," adds Rooney. "We looked at a number of vendors and Fujitsu was the only company that actually came onsite, carefully assessed our needs and made a considered proposal that met our budgetary requirements."

Solution

Fujitsu and AAG Systems worked together to install and configure one FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS DX100 with 12TB of usable storage in combination with two FUJITSU Server PRIMERGY RX2540 in First Scottish's office in Fife. The virtual machines and data located within the private cloud were then replicated onto the ETERNUS platform over the course of several weekends.

"What we have now is a highly available Hybrid-Cloud, Veeam to meet recovery time and point objectives and VMware to provision the virtual machines within our private cloud," says Mark Rooney. "The deployment was seamless and, because we performed the migration out of hours, it didn't disrupt the business."



A 1GB leased line connects the head office to the data centre so that replication can take place every four hours at record speeds. This means that the work of each of the hundred plus users is safely stored in multiple locations at regular intervals.

"We originally transferred 8TB of data but have capacity for 12TB and can further expand it to 132TB if necessary," continues Rooney. "That futureproofs the platform for growth down the line."

Benefit

The single most important benefit of the new system is that it de-risks the company when it comes to hardware failure or catastrophic events. By situating the disaster recovery within the office rather than the data centre and integrating a secure, public cloud element, First Scottish can be up and running within an hour should anything go wrong, and with replication happening every four hours rather than overnight, the recovery point is more recent.

"Were the data centre to become unavailable, we could transfer to the Fujitsu platform near instantly meaning business as usual for our customers as they wouldn't even notice," comments Rooney. "That means key applications such as Microsoft Office or our bespoke Microsoft Dynamics Navision solution have become highly available no matter what."

First Scottish has also been impressed by how easily the Fujitsu hardware is managed as well as its reliability. This has relieved the IT team of the burden of tedious and time-consuming administrative tasks.

"It is extremely easy to manage and provides reports with every replication so we can see it is all running smoothly," remarks Rooney. "Previously, we were constantly adding or replacing drives every week which took up a significant amount of time. Now it all happens automatically and the Fujitsu kit just gets on with the job."

That reliability and performance means that First Scottish expects to see a much lower TCO over the course of the hardware's lifetime. Furthermore, the success of this deployment has led the company to explore other areas where it might partner with Fujitsu.

"Fujitsu has provided a bullet-proof insurance policy for our critical business operations at a bargain price – replicating our entire infrastructure would have cost five times as much," concludes Rooney. "We are starting to spec requirements for our next data centre hardware refresh and will definitely be in touch with Fujitsu and AAG Systems again."

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