Save the Children

INTERNATIONAL CHARITY USES DATABARRACKS FOR BACKUP AND DR

About Save the Children

Save the Children UK raises hundreds of millions of pounds each year to help children all over the world lead better and safer lives. The organisation conducts charitable activities helping the most marginalised children in 120 countries.

Databarracks

The Challenge

Andrew Brenson, Head of IT at Save the Children.

While the organisation's focus has not changed in almost a century, the way in which it manages the raising of money and administration of aid all over the world has. Technology plays a massive role in Save the Children's operations. The organisation relies on its technology and IT infrastructure to run in the same way as any modern global corporation.

Save the Children was backing up its data to tapes which were taken offsite by a third party tape collection and storage company. Its disaster recovery arrangements were also no longer adequate.

"Our tapes were being taken to a depot in East London in an area susceptible to flooding. We asked the tape storage company to move them to another location, but that ended up being in Heathrow which has another set of risks attached. We wanted to move to a more automated, offsite backup solution but had a number of specific requirements."

"Although we were planning to upgrade our bandwidth, initially the backup solution would have to work over a relatively small internet connection.

We operate a mixed environment with physical and virtual servers as well as Oracle and SQL on the database side so we needed compatibility for them all. We are also always keen to minimise or avoid the presence of third party software agents where possible. What we wanted was software that could achieve these objectives with as small a footprint as possible."

To meet these requirements Save the Children chose a backup solution using the agentless Asigra software, optimised for 'incremental-forever' backups.

Databarracks installed a high performance HP DL380 server with over 3TB of usable storage on site for Save the Children. The local server runs the agentless Asigra backup software, taking any operating overhead away from the production servers. It also holds a cache of backups onsite for network-speed restores.

"We were never happy with where our offsite backups were being stored."

The Solution

With large volumes of data to protect, Save the Children needed a system that could distinguish between older static data and more critical recent data from the Oracle & SQL databases, and its Exchange cluster.

Databarracks used the BLM (Backup Lifecycle Management) functionality of the Asigra software to create tiered storage for 'Live' critical data and older 'Archive' data – more closely aligning the cost of storage to the value of the data.

"We analysed our data, and in reality only a fraction of it changes every day. A big portion is completely static. Whilst we still need to retain and protect that data, in a disaster it is a much lower priority than getting something like the fund raising database back online."

In addition to streamlining and updating the backup process, Save the Children needed to improve Disaster Recovery operations.

"Most systems are hosted onsite at our UK HQ in Farringdon. If we had an incident in the building or the server room then the impact on our work would be significant. With such a large volume of data and number of servers, restoring onto cold standby hardware at a DR site would take longer than the organisation was comfortable with."

The Benefits

In a disaster, data is restored into a preconfigured virtual environment. The Asigra backup software allows for physical to virtual recovery (P2V) ensuring all of Save the Children's servers can be restored. With the restoration occurring at the data centre, Recovery Time Objectives are vastly reduced.

Users are able to access the VDR environment via Citrix. Using thin client technology removes the need for any pre-configuration of desktop computers or the need for a standby site. Each user needs only a device with a web browser to continue accessing applications as normal.

"The cost to replicate all of our systems to another site for redundancy and DR is just too high for us, and the time needed to restore all our data and set up the network again would be too long. Disaster Recovery as a Service was a perfect solution."

"Recent changes in technology and improvements in bandwidth costs have made a real difference to what is now possible for backups and DR."

"I wanted our Server team to be adding value to the organisation, not checking backup logs or shifting tapes, " reveals Brenson, "Using Databarracks, we now have access to excellent technology as well as secure and resilient hosting."

About Databarracks

Databarracks is the UK's specialist business continuity and IT disaster recovery provider.

In 2003, we launched one of the world's first true managed backup services to bring indestructible resilience to mission critical data.

Today, we deliver award winning data and continuity services from some of the most secure data centres in the world, 30 metres below ground in ex-military nuclear bunkers, supported 24/7/365 by our team of handpicked experts.

We make enterprise-class continuity, security and resilience accessible for organisations of all sizes.

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