

Contingency cover implemented

Jackson Lifts prioritises business continuity with a disaster recovery solution

Jackson Lifts is a business that is very dependent on its IT Systems. Being a support company, it is vital that customer details are instantly accessible. The business can only afford a few hours' loss of its core systems in the event that they should fail. Hence, they turned to Network Interlinks to implement a disaster recovery plan.

BACKGROUND BUSINESS NEED

Jackson Lifts, established in 1979, is the UK's largest independent lift, escalator and cradle maintenance organisation. The company's headquarters are in Charlton with four satellite sites in Manchester, Birmingham, Bristol and Wimborne.

The business's IT systems are based on a Microsoft platform supporting Microsoft Dynamics Nav running on an SQL Database. These systems lie at the heart of the company and it is important that a business continuity plan was implemented to back up its data.

Paul Ringer, the company's IT administrator admits, "Up until last year, we only had tape backup, which is notoriously unreliable and is known to deteriorate over time. After six months, there's only a 60 percent chance that it will still work reliably, which means there's a 40 percent chance of failure. We knew we had to implement a solution that would deliver business continuity in the long term."

"We turned to Network Interlinks who have worked with us for a very long time (17 years). They had worked with us on a number of smaller IT projects, very successfully, during that time and so we were confident that they could provide us with the right disaster recovery solution," says Paul.

The company opted for a solution that would be scalable as the company's data is expanding at exponential rates. "We wanted to have a solution in place that would mean, in the face of a disaster and failure of systems, that we could be back up and running in under four hours," says Paul.

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SOLUTION SUMMARY

- Scalable and flexible data storage
- Improved data back up and system recovery
- Solid business continuity and disaster recovery plan
- Ability to work from anywhere in the event of a disaster
- Reduction of ongoing server costs

SOLUTION

Reliable backup and virtualisation

The solution, implemented in early 2010, is based on Netapp storage. This storage provides the core data solution for Navision, Exchange, file storage and the storage and management of the virtual server solution. Citrix Xenserver was chosen as the virtual server platform as, at the time, it was the most cost effective solution available, especially when delivered by the Netapp core storage.

Jackson Lifts has installed one FA-2020 filer at Charlton with a second filer at their disaster recovery site in Wimborne. As Paul points out, "We wanted to keep the data secure ourselves, which has the added benefit of cost savings as we don't have to pay a monthly or annual management fee to a third party."

The primary filer offers centralised fast storage, with snap-shotting, enabling frequent and local backups of data to be taken of the ERP system every 15 minutes 24-7. The remaining systems are backed up every three hours.

"Automation takes away any manual involvement," says Paul. "Now we are never more than 15 minutes out of date if a disaster were to occur." The data from the snapshots is continuously replicated to the remote site, where it can be made available within hours of losing the primary site.

Xenserver was used to create a virtual server environment which allowed better utilisation of "Tin" and added resilience for the server farm using Xenmotion and HA technologies. The use of virtualisation allows for rapid provisioning of additional servers.

Using virtualisation at the disaster recovery site allows for a minimum server requirement, reducing costs, rack footprint in the data centre and power requirements. "Virtualisation has reduced the necessity for so many servers, otherwise it would have meant that we have six or seven servers, but instead we have two servers with a VM farm, thereby reducing our investment as well as making it all the more manageable," Paul comments.



"We wanted to be back up and running with a skeleton staff within four hours of any systems failure."

PAUL RINGER, JACKSON LIFT GROUP

OUTCOME

Within budget and to deadline

Citrix Xenapp is used again at the disaster recovery site to deliver the core applications to users everywhere in the company as well as to those who may be working from home or from temporary offices.

Xenapp provides a very resilient, flexible and cost effective solution. The solution uses Wyse Wintarms for desktop delivery, reducing the cost of IT provisioning and simplifying the desktop. The solution is also energy efficient as the Wintarms are silent and use less power than a conventional PC.

The Core Netapp filers are scalable and, as the company grows, capacity can be increased to provide additional services such as mail archiving and/or document management. This is an industry standard solution (as are the HP servers used for processing). This means that the solution will have a long lifecycle and is supportable and flexible.

"Now that we have our disaster recovery solution we have the building blocks in place to implement a document management and workflow solution. Again we are working with Network Interlinks to build upon the success of this project and introduce a better structure for our data as well as new levels of security and authorisation within the company," adds Paul.

"The disaster recovery project gives us a great deal of confidence in Network Interlinks as a very competent partner. They delivered the project on time and to budget. It's a proven solution, as we've run a number of tests and it 'just works' as we expected it should." Paul concluded.



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