



SUNGARD

A LEADING BUSINESS FINANCE FIRM

POWERING UP BUSINESS CONTINUITY



CLIENT CHALLENGE:

On January 18, 2011, a business finance institution experienced a power outage. The utility company could not confirm when power would be restored. Given the time-sensitive nature of the data being processed at the company, a disruption was not an option..



SUNGARD SOLUTION:

Utilizing a high availability connection, the organization's data was accessible from a SunGard Availability Workforce Recovery site. Servers and workstations were set up, allowing the firm to continue their work with complete data, operations, voice, and network capabilities.



“Testing robustly means understanding each business unit’s requirements and engaging everyone in all entities of the business – financial, human resources, payroll, etc. Disaster recovery is a business matter and a company-wide function.”

Robert DiLossi, Director of Crisis Management for SunGard Availability Services

Maximizing resources is the expertise of a leading business finance firm. The company has earned global respect for crafting solid strategies that enable their clients to finance balance sheet liabilities and to create effective executive compensation, retention, and benefit programs.

Given the high volume of sensitive data being transmitted every day, the organization considers business continuity to be a number one priority. Accordingly, they engaged SunGard Availability Services to provide a wide array of services, including workforce continuity and disaster recovery. In support of their disaster recovery program, the company also contracted with SunGard for access to SunGard’s high availability network and offsite Intel servers during any crisis or incident.

POWER LOSS

On January 18, 2011, at 8:30 a.m., a transformer went down near the organization’s New Jersey facility. The utility company assured them that power would be back on by 11:30 a.m.

By mid-morning, the utility company had pushed the expected resolution time to 12:30 p.m. At noon, they stated that they had no ETA for power restoration.

At 2:00 p.m., still without power, the organization called SunGard to declare a disaster.

TRANSFER OF POWER

The loss of electric power might not seem, at first glance, to be a disaster. However, the IT manager for the firm explained, “We run a variety of internal applications at the New Jersey site, including financial transactions. Each night, the price files we put in our system are processed and transmitted to be factored into an overall financial picture. Connectivity is everything, since the data is time-sensitive.”

At 5:00 p.m., the firm’s IT staff convened with SunGard personnel at the nearby SunGard data center which housed the company’s data backup. Servers and workstations were connected, and by midnight the IT staff was pushing down restores to enable their financial applications to run. At 11:30 p.m., power was restored to the primary site. At that point, the company’s Infrastructure team continued to bring the network up remotely; by 5:00 a.m. on January 19th, the firm was fully functional at the SunGard facility, with complete data, operations, voice, and network capabilities.

The company’s personnel were given the option to convene at the SunGard site or to work remotely. The work remote option was chosen. The network remained in operation at the SunGard facility for two additional days to ensure against further impact.

THE POWER OF TESTING

The fact that connectivity could be established and functionality restored just hours from the time the IT staff arrived at the SunGard site was due in large part to the company's dedication to regular testing. Twice a year, the firm conducts end-to-end testing to ensure that they can recover and process business. A third test then focuses on the remediation of any issues uncovered during the first two tests.

"Testing allows us to refine and perfect our plan in a real environment," notes their IT manager. "With every test effort there are lessons learned. Technologies, resources, and environments are always changing: it's critical to keep abreast of these changes and factor them into our resiliency plans."

Through the test events, all the various teams – IT, the various business units, and the SunGard staff – were aware of their roles and were prepared to step in the moment a disaster was declared. Robert DiLossi, director of Crisis Management for SunGard Availability Services, affirmed the value of the company's approach. "Testing robustly means understanding each business unit's requirements and engaging everyone in all entities of the business – financial, human resources, payroll, etc. It is a mistake to test only an isolated part of your business, such as the IT functions. IT often owns and spearheads disaster recovery, but it must never be forgotten that disaster recovery is a business matter and a company-wide function."

"We have been working with SunGard for a long time," the IT manager stated in conclusion. "They are great. We know their people and they know what we need. When an incident occurs, we walk in and are ready to go. The SunGard staff is always available to lend a hand, provide guidance, and spend the time necessary to ensure a successful result."

POWERFUL LESSONS

In reviewing the January 2011 incident, the IT manager said, "Of primary importance is communication ... communication ... communication!" This includes communication between the resiliency team, the employees, and senior management. By keeping everybody aware of progress at all times, SunGard and the firm were able to ensure a successful recovery with no delay in the processing of time-sensitive applications. There was therefore no negative financial impact from the event.

Additionally, the disaster underscored the value of building in redundancies. The IT manager noted, "There are situations where the latest version or the most recent data is not readily available through normal channels, such as tape backup. Making this information available by using several accessible platforms provides added redundancy and the assurance that the business will not be impacted." Critical software, files, and documentation were encrypted and stored on both tape and USB media. In the January 2011 recovery, this redundancy proved valuable when certain files could not be extracted from the primary media source.

About SunGard Availability Services

SunGard Availability Services provides disaster recovery, managed IT, information availability consulting services, business continuity management software to over 9,000 customers Globally.

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