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SunGard introduces business continuity assessment services, new de-dupe capability

Enterprise and Mass-Market Hosting

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SunGard's Availability Services division has been making some technology upgrades to its business continuity services. Following on the heels of its recent 365 Hosting (otherwise known as **Hosting365**) acquisition, and new Secure2Disk offering, comes a new business continuity management software platform. While so many cloud providers are producing assessment services for workloads that belong in the cloud, SunGard has introduced an assessment service for enterprise that measures the resilience of vendors and readiness of employees in business continuity planning.

The new product comes in the form of SunGard Vendor Assessment and Work Force Assessment software. The idea is to help organizations mitigate supplier and personnel risks to ensure speedy recovery from disruptions to business and IT operations. Both pieces of software will be offered under the auspices of SunGard continuity management, which manages the lifecycle of business continuity planning, testing and execution processes.

Vendor Assessment software

The Vendor Assessment component reduces the time needed to maintain vendor records by allowing vendors to make updates to their business continuity information through a standard survey. The survey inquires about vendor business continuity plans in areas including crisis management and notification, pandemic preparedness, business operations and technology. The software provides assessment capabilities to rate vendors based on survey responses, enabling organizations to compare competing vendor ratings and identify suppliers not complying with continuity requirements. The assessment information can assist organizations in making decisions about vendor renewals and contract evaluations.

Employee Assessment software

SunGard's Work Force Assessment software helps organizations evaluate their personnel's abilities to respond to business and IT disruptions. It provides a tool for collecting and reporting critical employee information, including skills and certifications, roles in continuity activities, work-at-home capabilities, reliance on transportation methods, continuity testing and recovery experience. In a similar mode to the Vendor Assessment software, it allows personnel to review and update their business continuity plan records and assigned attributes, making it easier for organizations to collect and maintain accurate information. It provides a centralized way to identify each employee's significance in a recovery process and identify areas where additional back-up personnel resources should be considered. Organizations can use the records to spot where cross-training and cross-certification programs should be implemented to help improve overall readiness.

New disk-based recovery update

SunGard's Recovery Services span the spectrum of low- to high-priority (and low- to high-cost) capabilities, from tape-based recovery (with a recovery time objective in excess of a day) to fabric-based synchronous replication (with an RTO of minutes to hours). In the middle of this spectrum is Secure2Disk, a branded service that offers customers not only secure, disk-based backup, but also the ability to recover their systems at a remote SunGard facility, with an RTO of 8-24 hours. SunGard has been offering an online

backup service based on **i365's EVault** software since 2004 – for which it has in excess of 200 customers. It augmented this in mid-2009 with another online backup capability, this time using software from **Asigra** – which is when it first unveiled the Secure2Disk brand.

Now the company has added a new set of capabilities to its nascent Secure2Disk offering: a portfolio of disk-based backup and recovery services that forms part of its Recovery Services group. The new offering – Secure2Disk powered by **Data Domain** – bundles the de-duplicated backup capabilities from the **EMC**-owned technology with its own recovery services capability, which SunGard hopes will appeal to midsized enterprises looking to improve their recovery times in case of an outage. SunGard says that it continues to work with a small number of initial customers – around 30 – on this offering to get the model right before scaling up its efforts to promote it.

T1R take

Although planning for disasters is an important part of any IT strategy, the reality for many organizations is that they are insurance schemes that add little value to the business on a daily basis; that means that they begin to slip down the priority list when money gets tight. SunGard believes that it can actually benefit from this, claiming that, for many organizations, these important IT processes are best outsourced to a third-party expert that can deliver better value for money and a better service level than by running and managing such a capability in-house. The addition of Data Domain's capabilities to the Secure2Disk portfolio makes sense for SunGard since it aims to offer prospects a wider choice of capabilities around online backup and recovery services. However, this should be viewed within the broader context of where recovery as a service, in general, is heading: to the cloud. In other words, this gets interesting when SunGard can marry its recovery expertise with the cost economics of the cloud, using techniques such as shared infrastructure and automation.

Ironically, the new business continuity services are a value add for companies that would rather that their business continuity seriously enough to mitigate the need for relying on the backup-and-recovery services of their provider. It's an interesting step forward for SunGard, and one that falls in line with service providers that are looking to stay ahead of the curve, and the pack, by helping to assess the areas of potential weakness and vulnerability, driven largely by human flaws. In theory, this could help enterprises gauge which areas of the business require more attention and robustness, in much the same way cloud assessment services do for workload optimization. The acid test of course is whether this kind of premium service will appeal to the broader base of enterprise consumers – or only to specific vertical sectors with truly critical uptime needs.