

ENGINEERED SOLUTIONS

A DISTRIBUTION
SUCCESS STORY

WE TESTED OURS.
AND IT WORKED!



Why Every Company Should Test Its Disaster Recovery Plan

About the Client

Throughout its 80-year history, Van Meter and its partner Werner Electric have nurtured a culture of continuous improvement in an effort to deliver reliability and unparalleled service to its B2B customers.

To that end, the IT department at Van Meter frequently reviewed and upgraded its network and components. In 2009, the company initiated a virtualization effort that began with a centralized CLARiiON server infrastructure, according to Jason S., Van Meter Systems Engineer. Two years later, the company virtualized its desktops.

“ITsavvy has been involved in Van Meter’s virtualization process from the beginning,” said Ralph Oxley, ITsavvy Client Executive for Van Meter. Together Ralph and Jason have been looking at successive options that would bring performance and cost improvements. Ralph added, “As one piece was completed, we would turn to address another. The result is that everything fits together very well.”

The last pieces to be phased in were the company’s disaster recovery elements, which were ad hoc in nature due to an ERP business management software that required specialized components. Backup was time-consuming and inconsistent, Jason recalled. The IT staff had to oversee a distributed computing environment that was spread out over three states.

OVERVIEW

Industry

Distribution

Client Profile

Van Meter is an employee-owned distributor of electrical products with a specialty in automation. Clients are in the industrial, commercial, contractor, utility and OEM markets. Headquartered in Cedar Rapids, Iowa, Van Meter operates facilities with Werner Electric in Minnesota and Wisconsin.

Business Situation

Ensure business continuity to customers and providers in the event of a disaster in a main network operations center (NOC).

Solution

Our savvyBackup® and disaster recovery solutions all came together to provide a robust and secure temporary storage environment.

Benefit

- > Complete data integrity and business continuity during and after failovers
- > Approximately two hours for initial failover and 1.5 hours to power back up
- > Network upgrades completed seamlessly
- > Evidence to auditors that disaster recovery plan works
- > Metrics gathered to benchmark future failover tests

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So Jason and Ralph planned out a more robust – and virtualized - disaster recovery plan. This included installing sister systems in the Cedar Rapids headquarters and the Werner Electric headquarters in Cottage Grove, Minnesota. As Jason explained, “The two buildings were constructed at the same time, and they are near mirror images of each other, with similar capabilities.” Cottage Grove was a logical failover site. The plan was implemented in 2012.

Their Challenge

As an employee-owned company, Van Meter was subject to annual regulatory audits that included showing proof of a compliant disaster recovery strategy. While evidence of a plan itself is required, it's not a requirement for the plan ever to be tested. And, in fact, few companies ever do confirm the resilience of their plans.

Jason S. had the utmost confidence that the disaster recovery plan was ironclad. So when he needed to perform maintenance that would require powering down the company's entire system, Jason decided to do it utilizing the company's disaster recovery infrastructure. He would failover the entire system from Cedar Rapids to Cottage Grove, conduct the maintenance, then migrate everything back to Cedar Rapids.

Jason alerted Ralph Oxley, and the two developed a timeline and strategy to assure that everyone was well-prepared, that all systems were go.

Our Solution

On the day of the test, Jason assembled a team of five: three in Cedar Rapids and two in Cottage Grove. Two techs from ITsavvy were on call remotely. The failover test was a thing of beauty, going exactly as planned. The powerdown in Cedar Rapids took about two hours, and it took another hour and a half to bring everything back up on the other side in Cottage Grove. With the maintenance completed during the subsequent week, the following weekend the process was reversed.

A benefit to this scenario was that Jason's team had a comfortable schedule during which to complete their planned maintenance, rather than the usual three or four hectic hours techs usually have during a typical system powerdown.

“As one piece was completed, we would turn to address another. The result is that everything fits together very well.”

Ralph Oxley, ITsavvy

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This isn't to say that Jason was completely nonchalant about the process. "Our CLARiiON system had never been shut down since its installation in 2009," he explained. "We had a developer looking at all of the data to make sure it was consistent based on the tests we built into our plan." While they did run into a few minor issues, they will be corrected for the next failover test.

Their Success

And, yes, they *do* plan on repeating the disaster recovery test. Since its infrastructure is continually evolving, Van Meter plans to conduct the failover test annually, to make sure that any new elements are captured correctly.

They now refer to backup and disaster recovery strategies in all of their decisions, purchasing duplicate items for both Cedar Rapids and Cottage Grove. And they have impressive documentation that considers all of the company's infrastructure, applications, processes and specifications. Jason added, "Now we are able to not only show auditors the network diagrams of the disaster recovery plan but also able to show evidence of success with real physical results."

Ralph encourages clients to follow Van Meter's suit. "What you don't want to be is in the situation where you *do* have a disaster, and you've never actually pulled the plug on it." He explained that upgrading to new systems or moving to new facilities can offer perfect opportunities for testing a failover. "It just makes good business sense."

FOR MORE INFORMATION,

please contact an ITsavvy Client Executive.

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The ITsavvy Solution

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- EMC RecoverPoint – Replication Appliances
- EMC Avamar – Backup Appliances

SOFTWARE

- VMware (SRM) Site Recovery Manager
- VMware vCenter/vSphere Cluster
- VMware View

PARTNERS

- EMC
- VMware



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