

Case Study

Smurfit Kappa install VMware SRM and remove risk from DR



Company Background

Smurfit Kappa UK is one of the country's leading manufacturers of paper based packaging, providing innovative solutions in every conceivable size, shape, finish and strength. With a national network of facilities, the highly integrated business is structured to suit a diverse range of products and market sectors. Whatever the packaging brief, Smurfit Kappa delivers innovative and cost effective packaging solutions.

"The addition of VMware Site Recovery Manager to our infrastructure provides us with an additional layer of reliability and automation for our business-critical applications. This has helped to eliminate complex manual recovery procedures and has removed the risk and anxiety that is traditionally associated with disaster."

Darren Heaton, Service Delivery Manager at Smurfit Kappa UK

The Challenge

IT services are central to the success of the company with business systems being integral to the production process. Providing support for these systems is the responsibility of the internal IT department who had already begun a project to streamline and transform its IT infrastructure. The benefits of a virtual environment in place of traditional, physical hardware had been embraced and the foundations were in place for server centralisation and consolidation. In the initial phase of the project the workload of 30 physical servers was condensed onto just four virtual platforms and the whole infrastructure replicated to a second data centre.

After consolidation, the next step in upgrading its virtualised infrastructure was to re-assess Disaster Recovery (DR) and backup practices. The company's aim was to consistently provide a high level of continuity to the business through an effective DR solution, plus satisfy the parent Group's compliance guidelines which indicated that backup media was required to be located offsite and DR tests were to be conducted twice annually.

The existing DR strategy at Smurfit Kappa was maintained by a third party as a traditional ship to service. In the event of a disaster, identical servers would be delivered to site, backup tapes would be retrieved and any software would first need to be reloaded before the environment could be restored to its previous state. This common DR methodology had obvious drawbacks and was unable to satisfy a reasonable Service Level Agreement (SLA). This was a concern to the Head of IT, Colin Thistlewood, who had set a target Recovery Point Objective (RPO) of one hour and a Recovery Time Objective (RTO) of two hours.

The working relationship between Smurfit Kappa and ANS Group spanned over 18 months and included many successful projects. Darren Heaton, Service Delivery Manager at Smurfit Kappa said, "As a company, the level of technical expertise exhibited by ANS Group made them the ideal business partner to implement our disaster recovery solution. Their commendable portfolio of project references is a credit to them and they came highly recommended by VMware with their Enterprise Level partner accreditation. They were an ideal business partner to work with in order to install the chosen VMware solution."

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The Solution

VMware Site Recovery Manager (SRM) accelerates recovery via automating the process and simplifying management by making DR an integrated element of managing a VMware virtual infrastructure. Recovery becomes reliable as complex manual practices are eliminated and the technology allows for non-disruptive testing of recovery plans in an isolated environment.

In the event of disaster the business critical applications can be restored within one hour; a dramatic improvement compared with the old solution which would take a minimum of one day. This provides significant benefits to the end user - resulting in minimal disruption and downtime.

What's more, the ability for Smurfit Kappa to be able to seamlessly test DR on demand in a controlled and auditable way is almost as beneficial as the DR capabilities themselves. This feature effectively allows the business to test and demonstrate the DR capabilities on demand. It is a very powerful business benefit being delivered by a highly business integrated technology solution.

The Business Benefits

- Accelerate recovery by automating execution of failover - giving the business the ability to ensure that systems are highly available all the time and making sure execution of DR is as seamless as possible
- Simplify the creation and management of recovery plans using VMware vCenter. Multiple DR scenarios can be created to cover all aspects of the business allowing for a more granular DR process that previously would be impossible
- Improve the reliability of recovery plans by simplifying recovery and testing the process whenever is deemed necessary. The business will be able to invoke DR without impacting live systems and arranging suitable downtime - thus ensuring the DR process can be made as streamlined as possible
- Improve compliance with disaster recovery documentation that is automatically provided by Site Recovery Manager. A complete DR process script is generated with every SRM policy that is generated, which is invaluable when ensuring key employees need to be skilled in DR for a business.



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