Covid-19
Killed Traditional Disaster Recovery

Much has been said and written about the changes COVID-19 has brought to businesses. While most of the focus has been on enabling people and systems to work remotely, the pandemic has highlighted a number of other technology areas where conventional wisdom no longer applies.

Chief among these, says Richard Firth, CEO of MIP Holdings, is Disaster Recovery (DR). "If you do a quick Google search of DR in the context of COVID-19, you will find a number of sites talking about the need for enterprise resilience. All of the big analyst houses are there, offering pointers on finding ways to reimagine a business-as-usual environment that minimises disruptions.

Yet the elephant in the room is that, until a few months ago, DR was focused on providing business resilience by offering an-off site office environment that allowed employees to operate as if they were in their normal premises. The coronavirus pandemic has made this approach null and void."

He adds that while the cloud formed the technological foundation of these DR solutions, providing the means through which companies could easily spin up their systems, most offerings focusing on business continuity were expected to incorporate physical infrastructure like desks, phone lines, and so on.

" AGILITY IS KEY

"This is why the industry refers to the number of seats available in DR solutions. However, we have just seen that we need to create business continuity solutions that enable people to work apart and remotely," Firth says.

"The cloud has made this relatively easy for companies to achieve, and even those businesses that were unprepared for the changes that came as a result of nationwide stay at home orders were able to get back up and running relatively quickly. With cloud solutions like remote desktops offering centralised application environments, companies don't even need to worry about things like provisioning laptops."

He points out that this should inform every organisation's disaster recovery plans going forward. "Life as we know it has changed for good. This also applies to the way we do business. Companies can't afford – or expect – to keep doing things the same way."

In light of this, it's unsurprising that the analysts have all written extensive articles, blog posts and recommendations, Firth says. "They are all essentially promoting the same message: Companies have to be predictive and proactive in their decision-making to preserve business continuity, and they have to expand flexible work arrangements and other policies that allow people to work remotely and safely."

Agility is key to navigating the current crisis as well as to success and survival in the future, Firth believes. "The current crisis may have been impossible to predict, but it is teaching us a number of lessons. When the crisis is over, only those companies that were agile enough to change the way they did things quickly, and those that were able to reshape their business strategies, will thrive in the future," he says.

"The Covid-19 pandemic has highlighted the fact that there are a number of benefits that staff can enjoy working from home, including reduced transport costs, lower stress levels, and increased productivity. When it comes to disaster recovery in a world where remote work is the norm, these can be added to the myriad other benefits that we are seeing as a result of a distributed workforce, highlighting the fact that the traditional approach to business continuity and disaster recovery is dead."

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By Richard Firth
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