CASH Financial Services Group (CFSG)

Although CASH Financial Services Group's chief trading systems were adequately protected against disaster, the company wanted to minimise the effect on customer service if its back-office systems suffered downtime. With PlateSpin Forge® from Novell, these systems can be restored within just 15 to 30 minutes. Backup management has also been streamlined, enhancing operating efficiency which in turn substantially raises service levels.

Overview

CASH Financial Services Group (CFSG) is a leading financial services conglomerate in China. The company offers clients a range of online and offline services, including securities brokerage, commodities trading, foreign exchange and asset management. CFSG is headquartered in Hong Kong, and it has 10 other offices across mainland China, employing around 500 people in total.

Challenge

While much of CFSG's business depends on its online trading platforms, the company also relies on a number of other back-office systems both to manage internal processes and interact with clients.

In the event of a serious problem at the company's main data centre, the IT team would have to recover at least 30 servers from the previous night's tape backups. Up to a whole day's data might be lost, and getting all the servers up and running again would probably take between 10 and 24 hours.

"If ever our Microsoft* Exchange e-mail servers, our file servers or our accounting system suffered significant downtime, it would seriously affect our productivity and work processes," said Stephen Ho, Manager, Systems & Technology at CFSG. "More importantly, it might affect our level of service to clients. So protecting these systems and restoring them within the shortest timescales become important to us."

Solution

CFSG's IT team looked at solutions from several different vendors, and became interested in PlateSpin Forge from Novell.

"What attracted us to PlateSpin Forge was the ease of implementation and operation," said Mr. Ho. "The web-based interface makes it easy to manage, and it is much less work than our previous backup solution: there's no need to change tapes every day."

Working with Novell China, CFSG was able to implement the new solution in just one month.

"The Novell team did an excellent job, and we continue to work closely with them," said Mr. Yan. "We currently use PlateSpin Forge to protect 10 of our servers, but soon we will extend it to all 30 of our back-end systems."

CASH Financial Services Group at a glance:

Leading financial services conglomerate in China

- **Industry:**
  Banking and Finance
- **Location:**
  Hong Kong
- **Products and Services:**
  PlateSpin Forge
- **Results:**
  – *Reduced recovery time for back-office systems by up to 99 percent*
  – *Enhanced operating efficiency substantially*
  – *Streamlined physical and virtual server management*

"As a client-focused company, CFSG has been adopting the most advanced technologies to look after interests of our clients. PlateSpin Forge enables us to safeguard our back-office systems against downtime, protecting our business against the adverse impact on productivity, customer service and prestige that such downtime might cause. For this reason, PlateSpin Forge has become a very important part of our sustainability strategy in the long run."

Stephen Ho
Manager, Systems & Technology
CASH Financial Services Group

PlateSpin Forge takes snapshots of each system at different intervals—some every hour, some once every 24 hours, depending on the importance of the data. The snapshots are transferred to and stored on the PlateSpin Forge appliance at a remote data centre. If one of the production servers has a fault, the IT team can fail over to the PlateSpin Forge within 15 minutes, and then restore back to the main system as soon as the fault is repaired.

"Thankfully, we have never yet needed to use the solution in a real disaster scenario," said Mr. Ho. "But we have tested it extensively and we are impressed by the ability to recover systems quickly and reliably without having to worry about the technical aspects. Recovering a system from tapes is a complex process that requires a lot of technical expertise; but with PlateSpin Forge, it is just a matter of a few mouse-clicks."

Results

The most important benefit of the PlateSpin Forge solution is that CFSG's business is better protected against disaster. Instead of a period of 10 to 24 hours of downtime in the event of a major failure, systems can be recovered within 15 to 30 minutes.

"As a client-focused company, CFSG has been adopting the most advanced technologies to look after interests of our clients," said Mr. Ho. "PlateSpin Forge enables us to safeguard our back-office systems against downtime, protecting our business against

the adverse impact on productivity, customer service and prestige that such downtime might cause. For this reason, PlateSpin Forge has become a very important part of our sustainability strategy in the long run."

The solution's simple user interface makes it quick to learn and easy to use, so the company's IT team has been able to significantly reduce the amount of time it spends on managing backups, thus enhancing operating efficiency.

"It's difficult to precisely calculate the cost of downtime on these systems, but PlateSpin Forge has indeed saved our manpower, streamlined our work processes and enhanced our operating efficiency," said Mr. Yan.

There are also several incidental benefits: for example, PlateSpin Forge can be used as a tool to simplify physical-to-virtual, virtual-to-physical and physical-to-physical server migrations. It makes it easy to create and manage new VMware environments, and to move systems from one type of physical server to another.

"In the ever-changing financial community, data protection and system integrity are pressing and critical, and CFSG sees these as top priorities," said Mr. Yan. "PlateSpin Forge from Novell not only protects our systems and data from disaster, but also makes our whole IT landscape easier to manage."

For More Information:
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