

LARGE TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY

Large telecommunications company centralizes and standardizes disaster-recovery plans for 5,000 applications

AT-A-GLANCE

Key Requirements

- Standardized disaster-recovery plans in a single web-based repository
- Guaranteed availability of disaster-recovery plans in the event of business disruption
- Flexibility to modify data elements, workflow, and reporting without costly development resources

Solution

- RSA® Archer™ Business Continuity Management was used to create a single, centralized disaster-recovery repository
- Flexible platform to tailor disaster-recovery processes with no custom code
- Disaster-recovery and crisis-management process consulting from RSA Archer Business Continuity Management experts

Results

- RSA Professional Services halved the implementation time
- A consistent disaster-recovery process and methodology along with improved data quality

“We had inconsistent disaster-recovery plans in a range of formats, spread across multiple data centers. RSA Archer Business Continuity Management enabled us to accelerate the centralization and standardization of our disaster-recovery plans, so that we could improve their quality and ensure that, in a disaster, we could meet our recovery-time objectives.”

SENIOR BUSINESS MANAGER, BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND DISASTER RECOVERY DIVISION,
LARGE TELECOMMUNICATIONS COMPANY

This company is one of the largest providers of telecommunications services in the U.S., serving consumers and businesses with mobile communications, hosting, and networking services.

KEY REQUIREMENTS

This leading telecommunications company had grown through merger and acquisition and, as a result, its disaster-recovery system had become a mix of inconsistent technologies, data formats, and processes. The company has about 5,000 applications, but each application could have a number of application-recovery plans as well as multiple plans for recovering the underlying hardware and databases. As a result, there were 35,000 different plan documents stored in a range of legacy formats, including Excel spreadsheets, Word documents, and database systems. Plans were stored across the business's many data centers, and recovering any given application could require plans to be sourced from different places.

“The biggest problem we had was the inconsistent nature of the plans,” said the senior business manager in the company's business continuity and disaster recovery division. “Sometimes you would go to use or exercise (test) a plan, and when you opened it, there would be basically nothing there. The plans don't all look the same, and sometimes the application owners have been able to play the system a bit and haven't written the documentation in the detail required for a generalist to recover the application.”

With the data stored in so many disparate formats and locations, reporting was a particular challenge. “I can't begin to describe the complexity of pulling data together,” he said. “Every repository where plans were stored had to be accessed in a different way. We created custom reporting code, but it's fragile. One of our main programmers was off work and three days later the code stopped functioning because somebody upstream had made a change to a repository. We were scrambling to find people who could understand and modify the code. That was a bit of a nightmare.”

CUSTOMER
PROFILE



“The flexibility of RSA Archer Business Continuity Management was the number one reason we went with it. There’s no programming required. As long as the data is there, you can create the views and the forms and menus that enable you to manipulate and maintain the data.”

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The company needed to have standardized disaster-recovery plans in a single web-based repository, with a guarantee they could be accessed in the event of a crisis or business disruption. They also needed reporting that would provide a holistic view of the current business-resiliency program and flexibility for business users to modify data elements, workflow, and reporting without costly development resources.

SOLUTION

To achieve its goals, this company built a new repository for its disaster-recovery plans using RSA Archer Business Continuity Management from RSA – The Security Division of EMC. “We were considering another solution which had limited customization capabilities, but when we saw RSA Archer, it just blew us away,” said the senior business manager in the company’s business continuity and disaster recovery division. “With the other solution, we would have had to squeeze our square peg into a round hole. With RSA Archer, we are building the exact thing we want. The flexibility of the development platform was the number one reason we went with it. There’s no programming required. As long as the data is there, you can create the views and the forms and menus that enable you to manipulate and maintain the data. The end result looks like one of our in-house tools, but at the same time, we’re not altering any of the base components, so it will continue to work if the platform is upgraded. We’re not forced to take someone else’s tool and adopt their practices and terminology, as we would be with the other solution.”

Each application is owned by an application recovery coordinator (ARC), who is responsible for logging in to the system to update the disaster-recovery plan when it changes. When somebody logs in, they see only the information relating to their own applications, and can see the status of their disaster-recovery plans. Automatic warnings are issued by email when a plan requires a review, which happens every six to 24 months, depending on the application.

The disaster-recovery team and IT teams are able to use a dashboard to quickly see which parts of the company have the plans they need, how many plans are up to date, and which have been exercised.

RSA Professional Services provided expert assistance throughout the customization project, including on-site support. “RSA Professional Services accelerated our project and enabled us to deliver in half the time,” said the senior business manager. “They worked alongside us throughout our implementation and we benefited greatly from their expertise, experience, and resources.”

Nineteen people in the 100-strong disaster-recovery team have been trained and certified in using the solution through RSA Training. “We had a wide range of skill sets in the room, but everyone achieved certification, thanks to the excellent training.”

RESULTS

This large telecommunications company now has a consistent disaster-recovery process and methodology supported through one central tool, and appropriate personnel know where to go and what to do in a crisis situation.

It has also been able to improve the quality of the data it holds, by standardizing its format and using workflow tools to ensure it is updated when required. “The tool provides us with a way of quickly comparing data elements, so we can uncover anomalies, such as one application having two different server specifications attached to it. We’re very excited about the ability to spot gaps in the data and clean it up,” the senior business manager said.

He added: “With our old disparate system, we ran the risk of not meeting our recovery-time objective. For the highest-priority applications, we have a window as short as four hours. It can be impossible to meet that objective if we have faulty plans or plans that are hard to find the parts of. Missing information represents a serious liability, but our new system has closed that gap.”

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