iland™

Disaster Recovery in the Cloud

Contact

US +1.800.697.7088
EU +44 (0) 20.7096.0149

iland.com
@ilandcloud
facebook.com/ilandcloud
youtube.com/ilandinternet

Disaster recovery gets a lot of lip service as a top priority for companies relying on technology to keep their operations running around the clock. With more organizations operating 24x7x365, disaster recovery is more important than ever because even a few hours of downtime could cost millions in lost revenue – not to mention damaged customer loyalty and corporate reputation.

According to a September 2013 Ponemon Institute report on data center outages, data centers experience total shutdowns an average of more than twice every two years, localized shutdowns nearly six times every two years and limited outages more than 10 times per year.

But that hasn't stopped executives holding the purse strings from cutting disaster recovery budgets, essentially putting on blindfolds and crossing their fingers that they don't become the victim of severe weather, a malicious attack or a power outage. According to Forrester Research, disaster recovery has increased as an IT priority each of the last four years, but it has remained flat or decreased as a portion of IT budgets. "It almost seems to be an impossible conundrum, as there are more critical systems than ever before, extremely aggressive business requirements, and complexity invading from all sides, yet there's no more money to spend"

Those decisions aren't made lightly. No one wants an extended outage or lost data, but no one has an unlimited budget either. Companies have to prioritize

their daily needs over the expense of the unknown. Fortunately, the availability of cloud-based disaster recovery services has created options that didn't exist with traditional approaches, and high-quality performance is now available at a lower cost, with more flexible and customizable levels of service, and with less intrusion on regular operations. More customers are turning to cloud for disaster recovery. According to Forrester, cloud disaster recovery has grown to 19 percent of the disaster recovery market, and another 22 percent of companies are planning to adopt it.

Benefits of cloud

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Just as the benefits of cloud computing have made it popular for everything from enterprise file storage to CRM to email, those benefits now extend to disaster recovery. Here are some of the advantages of cloud-based disaster recovery, or DRaaS, versus traditional DR options.

CLOUD	TRADITIONAL
More efficient	More expensive, requires additional resources
Friendlier contracts	Contracts are restrictive
Customizable services based on priorities	One size fits all
Testing is automated, not disruptive	More time pulling tape interrupts operations
Capacity is scalable, efficient	Big hit to CapEx budget

• **More efficient** – Cloud-based disaster recovery is less expensive because, for the majority of the time, clients are only using storage resources. They only need to tap into their extra compute resources in the event of an outage or testing.

• **Friendlier contracts** – A common complaint about traditional disaster recovery contracts is that they are restrictive and can't be changed quickly or easily if customer needs change. Cloud providers tend toward the opposite direction, which is extremely important because changes will likely be needed and customers will require that flexibility.

• **Customizable** – The best vendors offer a variety of options that enable customers to mix and match possibilities to suit their needs. If costs weren't an issue, most customers would say they want all of their systems and applications up and running as soon as possible after an outage, but the reality may be that they only need a couple of applications immediately and others can wait – at a huge cost-saving. Vendors should be able to provide a sliding scale of services based on customer priority.

• **Testing** – Testing is important in any disaster recovery solution whether it is traditional or cloud. It should be done early and often, but it also should be a non-intrusive process. However, testing in a physical environment tends to be much

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The Forrester Wave™: Disaster-Recovery-As-A-Service Providers, Q1 2014, January 17, 2014. Forrester Research, Inc.

Cloud-based disaster recovery offers flexibility and performance that traditional methods can't match.

more painful. It may involve traveling to a remote location to pull up tape and configure equipment. And it is difficult to document to satisfy internal or external reviewers. With cloud-based disaster recovery, testing is more automated and much less invasive to ongoing operations. Vendors can adjust testing to customer availability and workloads, and they can produce clear reports to show whether it was successful.

• Capacity – Capacity is a key differentiator for disaster recovery in the cloud versus traditional options. Employing disaster recovery locally requires an overinvestment in infrastructure that can strap an organization's capital expense budget for years. With cloud, customers can architect what they need today and easily scale as their business needs change. The best vendors offer guaranteed capacity and the right to reserve additional space as needed. Customers need that flexibility so they can prioritize and adjust as their needs grow or shrink. They have the power to choose what to protect and when. Perhaps a customer has ten machines but would only need one back immediately after an outage. The other nine are lower priority and only need to be back as capacity is available. That flexibility to start small and adjust is not only convenient, it represents a huge cost saving.

• Connections – How does the vendor connect to the remote disaster recovery site? Some use VPNs and carrier-neutral networks. Vendors need to ensure secure connections and encrypt data. Typically vendors have more than enough bandwidth to ensure speedy data imports, but how do they address limitations on the customer's end? What is the vendor's solution if the customer's bandwidth won't support the data transfer in the time needed? This is important for back-up and reverse replication. Vendors should be able to help you restore operations locally or have an alternate plan in place to securely deliver data physically.

• Legacy systems – Many organizations rely on legacy infrastructure or applications for some of their most important functions. Backing up legacy systems can be one of the more complicated parts of disaster recovery plans. If a server or appliance won't be virtualized, the vendor should be able to colocate it in their data center and integrate it with their cloud. The best vendors are able to support legacy systems along with virtualized systems.

The choice is clear. Cloud-based disaster recovery offers flexibility and performance that traditional methods can't match. Just be sure to find a partner that helps you capitalize on those benefits.

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