

Disaster recovery: past, present, and future



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It's become almost trite to talk about how the cloud is transformative across a range of IT markets and business functions...

As a result, too many organisations had to operate with the ongoing risk that if a natural disaster or man-made error disrupted operations, their data and applications could be wiped out. In the past, this was something that many organisations just lived with and adapted to.

Organisations that did have DR solutions in place were, typically, those with deep pockets or in industries that mandated it. The approach was expensive and resource intensive, requiring duplicate resources be kept online at offsite locations - owned and operated by an organisations' internal IT staff, or by outsourcing providers who often specialised in DR.

Why is Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS) becoming so popular?

- **Great starting point to leverage the cloud**

Migrating existing on-premises applications to a true cloud environment is hard. It typically involves some application rewrite, which requires specialised resources, not to mention time, to implement. With DRaaS use cases, an organisation can more quickly and easily develop a strategy, prove it out, and then further expand, for example, adding Test/Dev workloads. This provides bite-sized steps that organisations can take to leverage the advantages of cloud infrastructure. This is especially valuable for mid-sized to smaller organisations who are often eager to adopt but don't have as much to spend on cloud initiatives.

- **Invisible to end-users**

DRaaS adds capabilities that are critical, but that are behind the scenes to end-users. DR solutions are developed and scenario tested without impacting on production workloads. This gives the IT staff the relative freedom to try out cloud resources for DRaaS use cases, without impacting on the day-to-day experience of (and triggering support calls by) their internal customers.

- **Avoids infrastructure lock-in**

Certainly DR solutions do leverage and standardise on particular software or hardware products. However, by consuming the solution 'as a service' leveraging a provider's resources - IT teams can dip their toes into offsite recovery, without having to commit to huge capital expenditure (capex) costs and infrastructure to maintain for years into the future. That means much more flexibility and ability to innovate as business needs evolve.

- **How do I know if I have a true DR solution?**

There is an amazing range of self-described DRaaS solutions out in the marketplace. Many provide great functionality for customers in terms of replication, back-up, and offsite storage features. However, in the event of a true disaster, where an organisation's core operations go completely down, having data replicated at another site or back-up copies alone will not ensure true recovery. The difference between having a replication strategy and a real DR strategy involves people and processes, often encapsulated in a 'run book'. The run book is the key to actually recovering from a disaster. Without it, an organisation might have all its data, but no predefined plan and staff that can execute that plan. This is critical to knowing the priorities of what needs to be restored, and in what order to recover as quickly as possible from an IT outage.

That's why DR delivered as a service makes so much sense for the vast majority of organisations. Service providers offering DRaaS provide not only their infrastructure capacity, but also staff with the experience in performing recoveries in a variety of real-world situations for a variety of clients. This allows organisations who outsource DR capabilities to tap into all that powerful expertise, rather than building all of that in-house on the chance that they will one day use it.

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