A TWO-TIER DISASTER RECOVERY SOLUTION GIVES NORTHDOOR THE BEST OF BOTH WORLDS

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OVERVIEW

- IT consultancy and solutions provider
- Long-term Outsourcery partner
- Delivering a range of IT services to over 300 customers
- A solid business reputation that relies on a resilient service
- A server mirroring and cloud storage solution

www.northdoor.co.uk

Founded in 1989 to deliver electronic transaction systems for the London insurance market, Northdoor now delivers a broad range of IT services to more than 300 clients from all sectors.

Northdoor's Technical Director, Rob Batters, describes Northdoor's scope, saying, "we are an IT consultancy and solutions provider delivering integrated information technology solutions. Our services encompass consultancy, application development, enterprise infrastructure and IT support, along with managed services for the mid-market – focussed on the Microsoft technology stack. We offer a spectrum of services from strategic IT consultancy, through bespoke application development, to managed services and infrastructure provision."

CHALLENGE:

Northdoor selected Outsourcery to design a disaster recovery solution to balance maximum support for critical systems with lower costs for non-critical operations.

SOLUTION:

Outsourcery delivered a two-tier solution that features both live server mirroring in the cloud for critical systems and a cloud-based repository for non-critical server backups.

COMPREHENSIVE DISASTER RECOVERY REQUIREMENT

With Northdoor's core business dependent on the IT service resiliency, any negative impact on clients and business resulting from a system malfunction would be unacceptable.

The organisation therefore required a responsive, sophisticated disaster recovery solution – one that could cater to both the critical and non-critical aspects of Northdoor's business while also making scaling up or down more simple and cost-effective.

> We're delighted with our DR solution from Outsourcery. The tiered DR solution we have meets our needs and those of our clients. The award-winning resilient infrastructure performs well and is very flexible – it's very easy for us to make changes to our DR environment as the production environment changes.

Rob Batters, Technical Director

THE OUTSOURCERY SOLUTION: SERVER MIRRORING IN THE CLOUD

Batters describes different levels within the cloud-based system: "What we've actually got is a two-tier solution, which makes it highly cost effective. The critical systems are done at the highest level of availability. So there is literally a live replica server with Outsourcery for each one of our critical systems. They're always up and running, and constantly being replicated with every data change we make. It's essentially server mirroring in the cloud.

"That means that if one of our critical servers fails we can just switch over to using the mirrored replica in the Outsourcery environment," Batters explains. "Because it's constantly synched and up-to-date, it's as if you're using the same server. In the event of server failure you can be up and running again in 15 minutes without any data loss."

STORAGE IN THE CLOUD

For their less critical systems, Northdoor decided to take a more cost-effective approach. Involving cloud-based storage, data changes on Northdoor's servers are replicated in Outsourcery's datacentre, but not on live replica servers.

"Various development environments are covered on a repository basis, so we don't have a mirrored server up and running," says Batters. "If one of the on-premises systems fails and we need to switch over to one in the cloud, we spin up a new cloud-based server and then restore the data from the repository onto it, effectively turning it into a live operational machine. It takes longer but we're not paying for a live server unless we need to invoke it."

A SCALABLE, FLEXIBLE AND RESPONSIVE CLOUD SOLUTION

Batters continues: "This solution has given us a very high level of resilience and the ability to quickly switch over for the critical functions, as well as a pretty fast level of recovery for the less critical things at a much more cost effective lower level."

The advantages extend beyond speed and reliability, however, as Batters explains: "The other real benefit is that it's very scalable and flexible. If we decide we want to make some things critical or stop others, we can. Alternatively, if our data volumes grow and if we need more servers quickly, it's easy to just spin up the extra resources in the cloud environment. It means we can scale our environment up and down to suit our business priorities. You could never do that if you did it in the traditional way."

> "The other great thing is that we've now spread our risk because we've got both traditional infrastructure on-premises and all our disaster recovery in the cloud. We've got a good mix of risk – something we found we could only do with a cloud-based solution."
>
> **Rob Batters, Technical Director**

AN UNEXPECTED LIVE TEST

As Batters discovered to his surprise, the solution soon demonstrated its value: "We have actually had to invoke it when the City was hit with major power problems one year, with lots of businesses affected, not just ours. The power interruptions led to some server failures, so while resolving the issue we were running our critical email and helpdesk applications off our disaster recovery server with Outsourcery. It was quick to change over and robust."

The results more than lived up to Northdoor's expectations. "Customers were totally unaware of it. There was no negative impact on the business – the best that we could have hoped for. In fact, it performed better than some of our own on-premises systems. Our staff were actually saying, 'Wow, this is faster,' and we would tell them, 'We're actually running your systems on a cloud server at the moment.' They were amazed," Batters concludes.
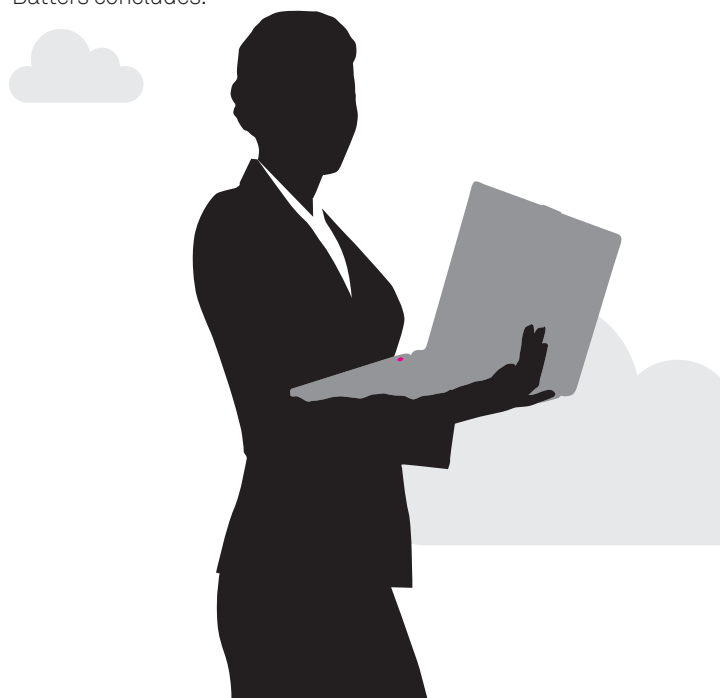
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