The Smart Disaster Recovery Strategy for Your Workforce: Cloud-Hosted Desktops
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Executive Summary

Most organizations believe that in the unlikely event of a natural or manmade disaster, their disaster recovery (DR) plan will keep them up and running. But the reality is, these events happen more often than you realize. Plus, only about 60 percent of businesses have documented DR plans¹, and most of those plans aren’t up to snuff. They typically cover servers and networks, but don’t address the desktops that workers rely on to do their jobs. Historically, desktop DR has been too expensive. But if your desktops go down, your employees could be out of work for days and the effect on your business could be devastating. To combat this, more organizations are turning to cloud-hosted desktop DR—an affordable, easy way to ensure workforce continuity, whenever or wherever disaster strikes.

“Unlikely” Seems More Likely Than Ever

No business is exempt from disaster. Whether you’re located in a region prone to natural disasters like hurricanes Sandy or Irene, or to massive snow storms, earthquakes or extreme heat, chances are your company has been—or will soon find itself—without power or the means to get employees to your offices. Even if you don’t experience a natural disaster, your business may suffer from cybersecurity attacks, power outages or desktop equipment failures.

Consider that Sandy caused $6 billion in lost revenue for New York-area businesses². Although that was an extreme case, more than 25 percent of enterprise IT systems are hit by outages of four hours or longer in a single year³, and an hour of downtime costs an average $163,674, with small businesses incurring about $8,581 in losses per hour and large enterprises a staggering $686,250 per hour⁴.

If your employees rely on physical desktops that are inaccessible, how will they keep your business going? If you’ve implemented on-site virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI), but the server powering your virtual desktops is in a data center that goes down, how will your employees get work done?

¹Disaster Recovery Preparedness Benchmark Survey, 2014
²“Hurricane Sandy’s Rising Costs,” NY Times, November 27, 2012
³“2010 CDW Business Continuity Straw Poll: Plans Don’t Align with Reality.”
⁴“Downtime and Data Loss: How Much Can You Afford,” Aberdeen Group, August 2013
Physical Desktop DR Isn’t Practical

Clearly, businesses need a disaster recovery plan for workforce continuity. But, contracting a physical DR facility for desktops—which is generally how people think DR is handled—isn’t always feasible. For one thing, the facility needs to be in a location easily accessed by your whole workforce. For another, it requires heavy CapEx and OpEx investments.

Maintaining a physical desktop disaster recovery solution that keeps up with your production environment costs more than most companies can afford. For example, best practice is to conduct annual testing to make sure your DR system is working and will be readily available when needed. According to Gartner, DR testing can cost a business $150,000 each year.5

Cloud-hosted Desktops: Insurance for Workforce Continuity

Cloud-hosted desktops are increasingly viewed as the smart, affordable and completely reliable workforce DR strategy. A good cloud-hosted desktop DR service delivers functioning, secure virtual desktops and applications to end users on any device—including tablets, smartphones, laptops, PCs and thin clients—anywhere. Desktops and applications delivered from the cloud look and act as part of your corporate IT environment, though they are running at a remote data center. All the infrastructure, including servers, software, network, and storage, is housed in your provider’s carrier-class, ultrasecure and highly available data centers. All you have to invest in is a subscription service based on the number of desktops you want covered and how quickly you want them available when disaster strikes.

Cloud-hosted desktops are inherently DR-enabled. Vendors who employ a grid-based platform easily support a multi-geography, multi-data center desktop DR service. This means that, not only do you benefit from having desktops in a data center that is not affected by any disaster that hits your business, but also, the provider can host your desktops across several data centers.

Here’s why cloud-hosted desktops make particularly good sense for desktop DR:

• Cloud-hosted desktops are always available, even when your office facilities are not.
• Employees are quickly productive; all they need is internet access.
• Employees can work from anywhere and any device, even their own personal devices.
• Your IT organization isn’t burdened by maintaining a separate DR environment or scrambling to get your DR facility ready when the need strikes. You simply reserve desktop capacity, design the recovery gold image, provision desktops into storage and integrate with your network.
• When your business grows, you can easily add virtual desktops to the DR subscription.
• There are no costly or time-consuming annual DR testing requirements.

5“Best Practices for Planning and Managing Disaster Recovery Testing,” Gartner, August 2011
Typical Cloud-hosted Desktop DR Scenarios

Businesses generally consume cloud-hosted DR desktops in one of two ways:

1. **Insurance for physical desktop environment**

   In this scenario, you use cloud-hosted desktops as the DR strategy for your physical desktops, reserving capacity at the service provider for all or some of your users. When the need arises, you activate the desktops and your employees are ready to go.

2. **DR for on-site VDI**

   On-premises VDI is typically deployed for specific use cases. Its capacity has an inherent limit based on the number of people for which it was designed. For example, an organization may have a VDI solution for 200 contract workers but, in event of a disaster, may need a workforce continuity solution for 1,000 users. With cloud-hosted desktop DR, you can maintain your on-premises VDI environment and use the cloud-hosted desktop service in emergency situations, enabling workers to be back online in minutes.

When choosing a cloud-hosted desktop DR service, make sure it provides the flexibility, responsiveness and availability needed to ensure continuity for your workforce:

- The ability to access dedicated and/or shared desktops and apps.
- Tiered plans by user type/recovery time SLA, such as within eight hours for staff critical to running your business’ systems, within 24 hours for revenue-producing staff (i.e., sales), and within 72 hours for other functional staff.
- Backed by a provider with cloud-hosted desktop expertise.

**Conclusion**

You never know when the next big storm or calamitous event is going to happen. And in today’s 24x7x365 world, you can’t afford for workers to be “off the job” for hours or days at a time because they can’t access their desktop, apps and data. If you don’t have an effective DR strategy in place for your workforce, consider a cloud-hosted desktops service. It’s the simplest and most sure-fire way to get employees back to productivity fast.

VMware Horizon® Air™ Desktop DR enables organizations to easily protect their business and ensure workforce continuity with affordable cloud-hosted desktops and apps. In the event of a disaster, your end-users can be productive instantly, from any device, anywhere, with a secure workspace connected to corporate resources. To learn more about how VMware Horizon Air Desktop DR can support your organization, go to [http://www.vmware.com/go/desktopdr](http://www.vmware.com/go/desktopdr).