

Backup & Disaster Recovery are Ripe for Cloud Disruption

The real challenge is not restoring data, but going a level higher and recovering services when disaster strikes. Read on to see how ReliableDR can help.

NEW CLOUD-BASED ALTERNATIVES FOR BACKUP

We have seen for some time the emergence of cloud-based alternatives to backup tools, most notably at the desktop/mobile level from companies like Dropbox and Box (formerly box.net). These tools intercept I/O and fuse local storage with cloud-based storage, and have been wildly successful for three key reasons: one, they have made USBs obsolete and data sharing has become much easier; two, we can access our files from any of our devices; and three, we don't have to do our own backups—not that a lot of us did, anyway.

Similar tools have been available for the server market, such as Riverbed, StorSimple or Ctera, but they have taken a hardware-centric approach that has not yet created a mass market. Amazon recently made a rather bold and market-shifting announcement with its AWS Storage Gateway, a virtual appliance that sits between applications and storage, and provides direct backup-to-cloud functionality for private clouds much like Dropbox and Box do for desktops.

Amazon's move seems entirely logical, almost expected, given the enormous appetite that desktops have shown for cloud-based data sharing and backup. After all, Dropbox runs on Amazon and surely the former's spectacular growth has not gone unnoticed to its host (it is fair question to ask why the G drive has not materialized after years in the rumor stage).

COPYING DATA NOT ENOUGH

So we can certainly expect cloud to bring disruption to the data center storage and backup markets in much the same way. But is that enough? Copying data is something that most companies have become pretty good at. The real challenge is not restoring data, but going a level higher and recovering services when disaster strikes. That's particularly important in this era of IT consumerization where end users expect to access data through applications of their choice on the device of their choice. Otherwise put, it is pointless to protect data and not protect the applications that exploit it.

And this is where the backup toolset falls well short of expectations. End users concern is how long the outage is going to last, and not whether the data is safe—that is a given, isn't it? Disaster Recovery is about minimizing downtime and making sure end users are productive again quickly. And the cloud has huge potential to orchestrate all the cloud components involved in service delivery to turn Recovery Time Objectives (RTOs) into guarantees.

BACKUP AND RECOVERY BECOME TWO SEPARATE PROCESSES

What we see here is a fork on the road: backup and Disaster Recovery are going to be two separate business processes. Backup will be a business process to cloud that supports data retention needs around compliance and quick restore of data elements, such as files, mailboxes, attachments, and database records. It will be used to restore data elements quickly, or to keep auditors happy about long-term data availability. Disaster Recovery on the other hand will be a high value-added business process across clouds that will assure business continuity and focus on service recovery, and not on data restore. Disaster Recovery will orchestrate across collaborating clouds all components involved in service delivery, from storage to hypervisors, operating systems, databases, middleware and applications. This will mean that when a cloud disappears, another cloud will be ready to take over, and do so at the push of a button, and with 100% certainty over the maximum outage time. There will be no need to worry about doing Disaster Recovery exercises because clouds will do them on their own, continuously and accurately.

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