

The Migration to Resiliency

JOHN JACKSON

In my last column, I explored the growing trend toward internal recovery. My view is that this is not a fad, but a serious trend that is gaining momentum. At the end of that column, I mentioned another significant trend that I am observing — the move to resiliency.

I define resiliency as the integration of disaster recovery, business continuity, security, and production high availability. When the industry got its start in the late 1970s, disaster recovery was the responsibility of the data center manager and/or the systems software manager. Many of us got our start in continuity in that way; I know I did.

What is the significance of this? The same folks who had responsibility for the production side also had responsibility for the recovery side. Then, in the 1980s and 1990s, we created new roles specifically for recovery and continuity. Disaster recovery coordinators and business continuity planners were hired to focus only on the recovery side and often reported outside of the production IT organization. The significance wasn't the reporting relationship, but that the two disciplines — production and recovery — began to drift apart.

In most organizations today, production IT operations is a standalone organization, separated from security and also from recovery, but highly dependent on what goes on in both organizations. As a result, we are seeing the emergence of a new role — vice president of infrastructure — with responsibility for all of these related disciplines. This is a good and important step in better re-aligning and fostering communication among these critical areas.

So now let's overlay that organizational change onto the move from shared hot sites to internal recovery. Many organizations that decided to move to an internal recovery solution are now asking themselves if there is a better way to keep their systems and businesses up and running than by going through the traditional "go down, come back up" method. Organizations are talking about not having a traditional disaster recovery or business continuity program. I

hear folks talking about splitting their production operations and running in an "active/active" environment, where workloads are shifted between facilities and systems. I also hear a number of organizations talking about geographically separating their business units.

Resiliency is all about sustaining operations, and scaling up or down as business demands dictate. Bringing the high availability, security, recovery, and continuity together allows us to better leverage personnel, skill sets, technology, and capabilities, most probably at a more effective, efficient, and economical level than before.

As I have spoken at conferences over the past 18 months — approximately 20 sessions across the U.S. — I have been presenting this concept of resiliency and conducting an informal poll of people who have either begun to move towards a resilient strategy or have already made the shift. Last year's AFCOM conference was indicative of what I am hearing, with 12 percent of companies already making the shift. While 12 percent may not be a huge number, I think it represents a trend that we will see growing over the years to come. It is a reason, in my opinion, that we see the major hot site vendors focusing on hosting environments for clients, often the production side, as clients begin their migration.

Business continuity planners need to be aware of this trend and embrace it. Our primary mission is to provide solutions that allow our organizations to weather outages and disruptions, and resilience might just be an appropriate strategy for us to consider. **CI**

John Jackson is a co-founder of Fusion Risk Management and a member of the Continuity Insights Editorial Advisory Board. He is an expert in the fields of business continuity, disaster recovery, and high availability. His 30 years of experience includes running all aspects of IBM, HP, and Comdisco's disaster recovery businesses and participating in over 500 actual recoveries for client companies. He can be contacted via e-mail at JJ@FusionRiskMgmt.com.

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