



Norco gets disaster ready with IBM® Softek® Replicator

About Norco Co-operative Limited

Norco Co-operative Limited (Norco) is a diverse agricultural co-operative that was established in 1895. The three business divisions – Norco Foods, Norco Rural and Norco Agribusiness – are active in many parts of the food supply chain. The co-operative has around 600 employees and operates across northern New South Wales and south east Queensland.

Problem

Norco Co-operative Limited did not have a disaster recovery and data replication plan in place for its multiple Windows servers. With these servers running business operations including Microsoft office files, multiple Microsoft Terminal servers, payroll, Time & Attendance, exchange servers and numerous other windows applications, the lack of a disaster recovery solution left Norco exposed to significant operational risk.

Solution

After discussing the problem with its IT support provider, IBM Business Partner* TRT, Norco decided to implement IBM Softek Replicator as its data replication software. Softek Replicator provided a cost effective answer to Norco's problem and could replicate data in a timely manner to the disaster recovery site without impacting the operation of the production server.

Benefits

Thankfully, Norco has not had to call upon the disaster recovery servers. Norco has conducted testing of the data replication, which resulted in data being recovered from the disaster recovery site in only three minutes.

Risky business

Norco runs a significant number of its business processes on its 10+ Windows servers. These include all Microsoft office files, multiple Microsoft Terminal servers, payroll, Time & Attendance, exchange servers and numerous other windows applications, as well as Sharepoint. While it had data replication in place for its UNIX environments, Norco did not have adequate measures in place for its Windows servers.

According to Sandra Hollands, IT Manager at Norco, "With a lot of our business on Windows servers, this gap left Norco exposed to a high degree of risk. In order to complete our disaster recovery planning, we needed to address data replication for our Windows environments."

Trusted recommendation

In mid 2008 Norco went to its IT support provider, IBM Business Partner TRT, for its recommendations on how to best deliver a data replication solution for its Windows servers. TRT recommended IBM Softek Replicator as the best product to meet Norco's needs. Softek Replicator is a multi-platform, non-disruptive data migration and replication service which provides a reliable method for ensuring usable data recovery regardless of platform and helps to reduce downtime for backup windows while enabling centralised backup from remote sites. The software was also able to provide the online replication of both data and operating system, something that was very important to Norco.

Rover Mercado, Consulting Engineer, TRT said, "TRT has worked with Norco since 2003 and in that time has built up a strong relationship. As a long term partner, we had built up a solid understanding of Norco's business and system requirements, and based on this, felt confident in recommending Softek Replicator to address Norco's need."

The ability of Softek Replicator to replicate whenever there is a change in the data meant that the production and disaster recovery sites are near synchronisation. As Norco is based in a rural area with limited bandwidth, complete replication of all Norco's data takes about half an hour, but with the constant replication and resynchronisation, only a small amount of data is not replicated at any time. Softek Replicator is also able to run in the background without interrupting the operation of the application, so backups can take place during normal business hours.

"Our production site and our disaster recovery site are located about 30 kilometres apart and being in a rural area, the link between the two sites can often be pushed to its limits. Working together with IBM and TRT, we were able to customise the settings of Softek Replicator to overcome these bandwidth limitations and maintain the data integrity we required," said Hollands.

Norco confirmed the decision to implement Softek Replicator in December 2008, with the project taking place during February and March 2009. The project was lead by Sandra Hollands, with support from Rover Mercado and two consultants from IBM.

Disaster ready

Thankfully, Norco has not had to call on its disaster recovery servers, but comprehensive documentation and testing has given Norco confidence that the solution is robust and business continuity needs will be met.

"Softek Replicator is easy to use and gives me the ability to simply and easily monitor our servers. It has a simple graphical user interface where on one screen I can click on any server to check its replication and reassure myself that everything is in order.

"With the implementation of Softek Replicator finalised, our disaster recovery strategy is now complete and we have peace of mind that our data will be accessible in the event of a disaster. The changeover from recovery site to production is really fast; in our test we went from replication to live in three minutes. That's faster than the UNIX solution for our two ERP servers," concluded Hollands.

This customer story is based on information provided by Norco Co-operative Limited and illustrates how one organisation uses IBM products. Many factors have contributed to the results and benefits described. IBM does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

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