

Six Reasons to Review Your Database Availability Today

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Data sits at the heart of all organisations and without it everyday functions simply cannot be performed. Whether your organisation is a large Fortune 500 or SME, reliance on data availability is growing. It is vital to ensure that your organisations' Database Availability and Recovery procedures are robust and able to meet business SLA's.

If not now, when?

It is often the case that processes are not tested until a real outage occurs and this is when organisations discover that their procedures are not working as efficiently as they should be. This is a dangerous position to be in as it leaves vital services vulnerable to downtime. This can have a hugely detrimental effect on the business and those individuals who are ultimately responsible for keeping services up and running.

If now is not the right time to review your database availability plans then when is the right time? The day after a major outage?

From working with many customers to help keep their critical databases up and running we have highlighted the following six reasons for putting Database Availability at the top of the priority list:

1. Lost Sales Revenue

Lost Sales Revenue has the number one spot because it is the biggest fear related to database downtime. It is a major concern for online retailers in particular. If customers cannot access goods and services online then purchases are hindered resulting in lost revenue. . Similarly in the banking sector where revenue is generated through credit card transaction fees and trading fees, if transactions cannot take place, revenue cannot be earned. In a slightly different example we can see how database downtime caused a provider to have to discount future services and thereby lost sales revenue after the event. In 2012 the UK mobile operator O2 experienced two separate faults due to issues with its Central User Database. In July 2012 millions of customers were unable to call, text or use mobile internet services for more than 24 hours. As a result the company was forced to offer subscribers a 10% discount on their bill and subsequently decided to spend £10m to replace the central User Database.

2. Lost Customers

In an online retail environment it is all too easy for customers to leave a website and take their business to a competitor. One click can have them abandoning their shopping basket and looking for an alternative. Customers expect services to be available 24/7 and even outages caused by planned, routine maintenance have the ability to leave customers open to using an alternative supplier if they cannot access the service they want, when they want it. Lost customers inevitably leads back to issue number 1 – lost revenue. It can also lead on to the following issue, number 3 – reputational damage. If a customer has been disappointed by their experience they are more likely to have a negative view of the brand

and even go on to share their experiences with friends and colleagues and in some instances, social networking sites.

3. Reputational Damage

Regardless of the old adage “No PR is bad PR” everyone wants to avoid a situation that could put their organisation in a position where they face customer complaints and damaging press coverage. In May 2014 Adobe experienced a 27-hour outage in its “Creative Cloud” suite, used by many organisations and individuals in the creative industry. The failure occurred during database maintenance activity. This left users unable to work and resulted in a backlash of bad PR for the company. Reputational damage is a serious issue which can cost time and money to repair.

4. Regulatory and Compliance Issues

Regulatory and Compliance issues are of particular interest to the banking and financial services sector. In such a highly regulated sector, organisations are under real pressure to ensure that customers are able to access services. A widely publicised ruling in 2012 by the Financial Conduct Authority saw RBS fined £56m as a result of software issues which left millions of customers unable to access their accounts.

5. HR Issues/Labour Productivity Costs

The cost of having employees who are unable to carry out work because they cannot access the systems they require should not be ignored. It is important to understand the value of lost productivity. In addition to this, it is highly likely that IT resource will have to work extra hours to ensure that systems are up and running again as quickly as possible. Sometimes it is even necessary to call in third party support. All of these additional people costs must be taken into consideration.

6. Marketing/PR Costs

We have already discussed the potentially disastrous effects of bad PR. It is the marketing and PR departments who will have to be on hand to deal with the press and work on a strategy of repairing the brand image. All these extra man-hours need to be calculated when looking at the cost of database downtime.

However you measure the cost of a database outage there will always be a negative financial effect on the organisation. If an organisation is unfortunate enough to hit the headlines with a major outage then the PR fallout can be catastrophic with the potential of alienating existing and new customers for good.

Outages are inevitable due to a range of causes including software problems, hardware failures and security breaches. It is therefore vital for organisations to make sure that their people and processes are ready when problems arise.

About Triton Consulting

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