



# DISTASTER RECOVERY BEST PRACTICES

**NetworkServices**  
Corp.



**COMPANY:**  
Network Services Corporation



**USES:**  
Disaster Recovery (DR)



**INDUSTRY:**  
Network Services

**OFFSITE enables  
NCS to hit an  
8 hour RTO**



## WHERE TO START

Your Board of Directors comes to you and delivers a hard mandate for a service level agreement (SLA) to the business with a recovery time objective (RTO) of full IT systems and operations recovery within 8 hours of a declaration or disaster. Where do you start?

The answer to this questions is easy if you are an IT professional like Jon Whiley, Senior Director of IT Operations for Network Services Corporation (NCS). Jon has driven disaster recovery (DR) from the seat of IT for over a decade. Whiley states, "Good IT teams want to make sure everything is backed up and protected, so the business is brought back up and the internal and external customers are happy."

## CHANGES IN DR PRACTICES

If you are going to understand the best practices in DR, Whiley is a good person to speak with. He began his career in IT as a central office technician when DSL was a popular method of business connectivity. Early in the process he found the value of documentation in DR. He then moved on to an exchange carrier and managed through an explosive period of business growth, taking a single location in Columbus, OH, to 250 points-of presence (POPs) on the internet and 15 data centers. All along that way, Whiley gathered great practices and insights into a proper DR and business continuity (BC) strategy and carries all of that into the approach he uses at Network Services Corporation.

Things have certainly changed through the years in DR. Whiley explains, "When I started doing DR, you didn't have virtual servers and virtual appliances weren't around. You started with tape back up." Restoring from tape could take an entire night to go back to the tapes and it could take up to two days to complete a full system of IT operations. "One of the biggest changes over the years is the time it takes to complete a full recovery. What used to take days is now reduced to something you can do within hours," said Whiley.

# "GOOD DR REQUIRES CONSTANT EVALUATION"

**JON WHILEY**

Senior Director of IT Operations

## 3 BEST PRACTICES FOR DR STRATEGY

Whiley believes there are three best practices that all IT professionals should follow in developing a solid DR strategy.

- Start off with clearly established goals and objectives of your DR plan
- Train your team and create comprehensive documentation in the DR plan
- Conduct audits of the plan – including the ultimate audit of a full-blown DR test on your systems and going all the way through the process to recovery

"Good DR isn't a set it and forget it approach. It's not a one time thing," said Whiley. "Good DR requires constant evaluation, commented Whiley. "As you make a change on your network or you add a new circuit with a remote office or upgrade a new hardware vendor into your infrastructure, you need to be certain you go back and update that change into your DR plan," added Whiley. In this way, the DR plan becomes a living document and a process embedded in your IT systems, not something that sits outside.

## KEEP THE PLAN SIMPLE

Another element that Whiley calls out as essential is making the plan simple. "You need to start by asking key questions about your DR plan," said Whiley. "Is it detailed enough that anyone could be asked to do it? One person on the team, a senior network engineer, might know the process like the back of his hand. You need to make sure even a junior guy could accomplish that step of the plan," finished Whiley.

The strongest DR plan also includes the proper partners and resources. Whiley indicated, "Any good DR partner needs to have the facilities to support the recovery objectives of a DR plan." Whiley outlined that the 2N design of the data center for DR, needs to have the proper systems including UPS systems, chilling plants and generators to ensure the facility will always

be online without disruption. It is important that the facility has the credentials of a SOC 2, Type 2, audited facility and has appropriate processes built into their operations. "If the data center facility isn't doing a good job of testing their UPS systems or doing a good job with physical security, they likely are falling short of the bigger things like investment in core systems and taking a serious approach to firewalls and network security," commented Whiley. Whiley indicated that looking at simple things like how a data center is designed and maintained or what their basic access and security policies are, will tell you a lot about how they're able to support your larger DR objectives.

## RELIABLE DR INFRASTRUCTURE

Whiley indicated, "Today we do all of our back up at OFFSITE, it is not just a DR site for us. OFFSITE provides the DR infrastructure location, as well as a work location for our end users through workplace recovery services." Whiley commented on the value of having a partner that is easy to work with and not just because of their size. He stated that a DR partner needs to understand the needs of the business and provide world class operations along with a personal touch. "Running our systems with replication (at OFFSITE), enables us to serve our users well. If someone loses a file on our shared drives, we simply go to a copy that sits in the OFFSITE data center and reset it. All of that is done within minutes."

DR can be a daunting undertaking for any organization and mandates from above are often placed on IT to comply. Following some simple best practices, incorporating these key elements and selecting the right partner all serve to give your business the piece of mind it demands and the comprehensive approach to DR so your business always achieves continuity in your operations.

## LEARN HOW OFFSITE CAN HELP YOUR COMPANY WITH DR

Contact our DR team or check out Off-Site.com for all your company's DR needs. Or pass on OFFSITE to other companies.

