



“FalconStor NSS and FalconStor CDP are consistent with our overall DR strategy. Unique FalconStor MicroScan technology ensures that we can replicate and recover quickly, while preventing future failures. This gives us more time to deal with blips in other departments.”

– Mark Sykes, Information Services Manager, Charities Aid Foundation

Charities Aid Foundation

Replication ensures service continuity by minimizing risks and reducing RTO from weeks to hours, increasing ability to provide aid

Background

For more than 80 years, the Charities Aid Foundation (CAF) has been working to help donors to give more effectively and easily, and to help charities to make the most of their resources. Its core function is to provide innovative financial services to charities and their supporters. It distributes over \$1.6 million to charities on each working day of the year and, through the bank it owns, its higher interest rates and lower fees enable an extra \$33.3 million to go to the charity sector each year.

Challenge

Because CAF exists specifically and solely to provide financial services to the charity sector, it has never operated under the same market pressures or with the same budgets as commercial financial services providers. As a result, its IT infrastructure had evolved in a particular way: slowly, organically, and without regular hardware ‘refreshes.’ However, CAF’s storage infrastructure had become difficult to scale and to manage, especially from a disaster recovery (DR) perspective.

As part of a wider objective to create an IT infrastructure to support the business into the second decade of the 21st century, a project was conceived to upgrade CAF’s data storage, with two key objectives:

- > Improving storage efficiency and agility
- > Increasing resilience throughout the infrastructure, minimizing points of failure to prevent disruptions from occurring in the first place

The CAF project managers felt that there were good reasons to abstract the data from the hardware on which the data sits in order to be better able to protect it. They also wanted to change the way the company viewed business continuity by taking a more proactive stance toward disaster prevention as well as recovery. A decision was made to virtualize CAF’s storage and to protect the data that resides on that virtualized storage through offsite replication.

FalconStor Solution

To minimize the likelihood of downtime and avoid the inconvenience or expenditure of additional scripting or other integration costs, CAF has best-of-breed solutions in all of the key ‘crunch points’ in its infrastructure. “There are two

Industry

Finance

Company Profile

The Charities Aid Foundation is a registered charity that delivers financial services to other charities. It works to create greater value for these charities and social enterprise by transforming the way donations are made, and the way charitable funds are managed.

IT Environment

- > VMware
- > HP servers
- > HDS SAN arrays
- > Microsoft SQL Server
- > Oracle
- > Proprietary financial applications

Challenges

- > Replace non-scaling infrastructure
- > Increase IT and business agility
- > Improve DR reliability and manageability

FalconStor Solution

- > FalconStor® Network Storage Server (NSS)
- > FalconStor® Continuous Data Protector (CDP)

Benefits

- > Improved RPOs for all business departments
- > Reduced RTO for all key applications to less than 8 hours
- > Reliable, flexible DR and business continuity enables IS department to focus on helping other departments

main reasons for this," says Mark Sykes, Information Services Manager. "We need confidence that it will simply work, and we have to be sure that our new solutions all have the potential to serve us in the foreseeable future." With that in mind, CAF implemented the following data protection solution:

- > A virtualized server environment leveraging VMware vCenter Site Recovery Manager running on HP hardware.
- > Hitachi SANs as storage hardware with 30TB of data, 10TB of which is live production data.
- > FalconStor® Network Storage Server (NSS) gateway appliances virtualizing the Hitachi storage, installed in high availability (HA) pairs for optimal DR and business continuity. One pair is located onsite at the primary data center, and a second pair resides at a hosted DR site. FalconStor NSS replicates all data between the two sites. "It is important that our DR site is as 'production grade' as our primary site," explains Sykes. Integrated MicroScan™ technology minimizes the amount of data transmitted.
- > FalconStor® Continuous Data Protector (CDP) technology enables the CAF to leverage the remaining physical systems that they either cannot or do not want to move into the virtualized environment – such as heavily used legacy database servers that do not perform well in a normal SAN, and some remote office servers that do not have their own SAN. In these cases, FalconStor CDP is used to replicate local disk data into the FalconStor NSS-protected environment.

Business Benefits

The benefits that the FalconStor solution offers CAF are considerable and have met or exceeded project targets. FalconStor NSS and FalconStor CDP satisfy CAF's business objectives on all fronts: the products work exceptionally well with VMware Site Recovery Manager, are self-documenting, require minimal scripting, and have already demonstrated value. "Together, FalconStor NSS and FalconStor CDP provide effective DR," says Sykes.

The solution's central management console makes it simple and straightforward to provision applications and virtual machines with disk storage from the virtualized SAN, while remote replication has brought confidence in the business' ability to recover from interruption. By greatly reducing data traffic, MicroScan technology significantly reduces monthly bandwidth and data link costs.

For CAF it is important to be able to test the solution. "It's impossible to predict every scenario," says Sykes. "Although we prefer to bank on resilience to prevent downtime from happening, the combination of flexible procedures and reliable technology can bring us back online if it does happen." The FalconStor solution makes DR rehearsals fast and easy.

Lastly, recovery point objectives (RPOs) have improved significantly, varying appropriately between business areas, while recovery time objectives (RTOs) have been reduced from up to four weeks, to eight hours or less." FalconStor CDP enables recovery in a 'warm' state, giving us much better recovery times and recovery points than previously," Sykes concludes. "In the event of a service outage, the FalconStor solution will allow our IS team to spend more time helping all areas of the business, rather than struggling with the recovery of systems and data."

For more information, visit www.falconstor.com/NSS and www.falconstor.com/CDP, or contact your local FalconStor representative.

Corporate Headquarters
USA
+1 631 777 5188
salesinfo@falconstor.com

European Headquarters
France
+33 1 39 23 95 50
salesemea@falconstor.com

Asia-Pacific Headquarters
Taiwan
+886 4 2259 1868
salesasia@falconstor.com

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