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Customer Case Study

British American Tobacco Assures BlackBerry Availability with Neverfail

The Business Need

British American Tobacco is the world's most international tobacco company and the second largest quoted tobacco group by global market share, with brands sold in more than 180 markets. Founded in 1902, the company has sustained a significant global presence for more than 100 years and currently employs more than 55,000 people worldwide. With over 300 brands in its portfolio, British American Tobacco makes the cigarette chosen by one in six of the world's one billion adult smokers. The company holds robust market positions in each of its regions and has leadership in more than 50 markets.

On-demand communication among British American Tobacco's senior executives, many of whom are based in the company's global headquarters in London, is essential for the management activities required to run this truly global business. "Always available" 24/7 access to corporate tools, such as email and management platforms, is vital as British American Tobacco executives travel across the world and through many time zones. Most executives are equipped with a RIM BlackBerry to ensure that they have access to up-to-date management information, are always able to respond to events and are able to take advantage of opportunities in this fast moving business.

In order to protect its entire RIM BlackBerry Enterprise Server (BES) environment, British American Tobacco had to ensure a solid failover capability for its IBM® Lotus® Domino® and Microsoft® SQL Server installations. "Our senior executives need access to our communication and information platforms whenever they want and wherever they are, and BlackBerry helps them to achieve this," says David Sampson, Head of Headquarters IT for British American Tobacco. "To ensure this level of service, we needed a solution that guarantees availability in the face of any interruption, no matter what the cause."

The Selection Process

British American Tobacco examined a number of options and concluded that the Neverfail technology offered the

THE COMPANY

About British American Tobacco

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best potential to provide seamless failover at the touch of a button. After an extensive evaluation of Neverfail's products, the company decided to implement Neverfail for RIM BlackBerry Enterprise Server (BES), Neverfail for IBM Lotus Domino and Neverfail for Microsoft SQL Server.

"Neverfail offered the best failover solution for BlackBerry targeted at a Lotus Domino environment, which was an essential selling point for us," said Sampson. "We were also looking for significant vendor and partner commitment to help tailor the solution to our precise needs, and to work with us to ensure a good fit with our overall IT architecture."

The Solution

In September 2006, British American Tobacco ran the chosen Neverfail suite for a pilot group of 70 executives. In order to

put Neverfail to the test, the Headquarters IT team planned a business hours failover of its BlackBerry, Lotus Domino and SQL Server services to its disaster recovery site, roughly 40 miles from the London Head Office. “We failed over soon after the start of the business day, all BlackBerry services ran for the day without a problem, and we failed back that evening without any disruption in service – it was great!” said Laurence Dale, Technical Architect of the company’s BlackBerry solution.

“During this pilot, we didn’t receive a single concern or criticism from the users involved; business continued as normal throughout the day even though some of our most critical applications were being run from our disaster recovery site,” continued Dale. “This experience was a huge confidence builder for us; we were convinced that we had made the right choice in Neverfail.”

Neverfail’s technology creates a clone of the primary server on a passive secondary server, and monitors the performance of the application environment using Neverfail Heartbeat. If problems are encountered, Neverfail attempts to restart the application before either automatically switching over to the secondary server or alerting the IT staff that a manual failover should be conducted. As users have their connections and service transferred, they should not experience any downtime nor should they need to restart their applications.

“During the installation process, one of the things that stood out for me was the sheer dedication and flexibility that both Neverfail and their partner showed. Not only did they deliver a high quality product, they worked tirelessly to deliver, met their commitments throughout and always made sure we were satisfied,” commented Sampson. “That kind of customer service and commitment is truly remarkable.”

The Results

With Neverfail, British American Tobacco has a failover solution that provides flexibility, reliability and value for money. In April 2007, this strategy was tested again when the company conducted electrical maintenance work at its Headquarters over a three-day period. Using Neverfail, the company was able to failover its BlackBerry applications to its disaster recovery site in a matter of minutes and subsequently fail these services back with equal ease.

“British American Tobacco’s mobile platforms have come to lie at the heart of our business use of technology. The simple fact is that Neverfail keeps that heart beating.”

David Sampson
Head of Headquarters IT
British American Tobacco

“Previously, this type of outage would have been an absolute nightmare to manage; it would have had a significant impact on our IT team’s resources and we would have risked a loss in the BlackBerry service. With Neverfail, this potentially complicated situation was cut down to the click of a few buttons. The Neverfail solution was rock solid and we are delighted with the way it performed,” commented Dale.

British American Tobacco is also running Neverfail for Microsoft SQL Server and Neverfail for Microsoft IIS in another business solution. In the future, the company plans to extend the use of Neverfail further to protect the VMware management platform. The combination of Neverfail and VMware will allow for an extremely robust IT infrastructure, offering the benefits of server consolidation as well as proven disaster recovery and business continuity capabilities.

“We look forward to continuing our work with Neverfail. We have been delighted so far and see no reason why this should not be the case well into the future,” said Sampson. “British American Tobacco’s mobile platforms have come to lie at the heart of our business use of technology. The simple fact is that Neverfail keeps that heart beating.”

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