

Goodman Jones Counts on High Availability from Neverfail

The Business Need

Technology plays a crucial role in meeting critical deadlines for Goodman Jones, a firm of Chartered Accountants based in central London. Formed in 1934, the 80-person firm offers a broad range of personalised business services, including auditing, tax mitigation, payroll processing and management reporting. The firm prides itself on the quality of service and specialist experience to which clients have access, and is retained by a number of mid-sized enterprises and subsidiaries of international companies across the UK.

The firm's reliance on IT means it can ill afford downtime, as any outage in its system affects not only its staff's ability to work, but also could seriously impact both the firm's reputation and that of its clients. Every month, Goodman Jones processes more than £3 million in salaries for its clients' staff, making it imperative that its systems are constantly running to ensure accuracy of data and the ability to meet deadlines.

Philip Woodgate, business systems partner at Goodman Jones, was responsible for assessing how the organisation could protect itself against downtime. "We required a system that could protect our internal processes against disaster, but more importantly we needed one that would make sure that information is available to clients and staff whenever they need it. A good example of this is our payroll services: we simply cannot afford to have any problems that would affect our ability to process these payments for clients."

The Evaluation Process

Goodman Jones previously had a tape back-up system, but required a solution that offered greater flexibility and higher availability of applications, while still being simple to manage. Together with his IT team, Woodgate began evaluating disaster recovery providers such as Double-Take, as well as clustering solutions.

THE COMPANY

Goodman Jones

Goodman Jones is a firm of Chartered Accountants based in central London offering a broad range of personalised business services. Formed in 1934, the firm has 13 partners and a total of 80 employees.

"These systems certainly appeared to work, but they did not offer the benefits of simplicity and ease of management that we demand," explained Woodgate. "The system that we had in mind needed to be transparent to our users and reduce the level of complexity that we were facing. Ease of management is why we decided to look at Neverfail, and it met our criteria far better than any other product on the market."

Following a web seminar and a period of research, Woodgate decided on Neverfail to protect the company's core applications – Exchange (for email), SQL and File Server. Neverfail works by creating a clone of the primary server on a secondary server. This secondary server monitors the performance of the application. If any problems are encountered, Neverfail tries to restart the application before automatically switching over to the secondary server. Users also have their connections and service transferred automatically during this period.

The Solution

Goodman Jones implemented three application modules to protect its core business critical applications: Neverfail for SQL Server, Neverfail for File Server and Neverfail for Exchange. Each application is hosted across two servers, with the primary server being kept in the company's data centre. The secondary server for the three applications is situated in a remote hosting centre based in Docklands and is connected to the primary server over a WAN.

In addition, Woodgate opted to install Neverfail's Low Bandwidth Module to make the best use of the WAN connection. "It was vital to our infrastructure that we could optimise the replicated data that would be going out across the WAN to our secondary servers. The Low Bandwidth Module compresses all this data very efficiently so that we make the best use of our bandwidth," said Woodgate.

Finally, Goodman Jones also installed the Neverfail Data Rollback Module, which allows organisations to restore their systems to a previous state in the event of data corruption or a replicated virus. "The ability to return to the previous system set-up was very important to us; this additional security for our information gives us an extra layer of trust," added Woodgate.

The Results

The Neverfail solution has been running in production since September 2005, and during this time, Goodman Jones has been fully protected against incidents of downtime. "Since the installation of Neverfail, we have had continuous access to information and applications," said Woodgate. "Aside from our planned quarterly test procedures, there have been two particular instances when the system has switched over to run on the secondary server. In both cases, there was no impact on user performance – in fact, the only reason I know that these switchovers have actually taken place was due to the email alerts that I received."

"Using Neverfail, our business is protected and our systems work continuously. An issue like email not being available is now a thing of the past."

Philip Woodgate
Business Systems Partner
Goodman Jones

Goodman Jones continues to rely on Neverfail to support its business, both for its internal processes and to ensure that clients receive the appropriate level of service. "In today's environment, downtime is simply unacceptable for an accountancy firm like ours," concluded Woodgate. "Our clients are often working to strict deadlines, and any incident which led to us not being able to fulfil our duties to them would be catastrophic. Using Neverfail, our business is protected against any application issue and our systems work continuously. An issue like email not being available is now a thing of the past."

neverfailTM

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