STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGIES SHINES LIGHT ON THE RIGHT BACKUP AND RECOVERY SOLUTION

How AECC/AECI's downtime went to 99.9 percent uptime

Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas
We Are Arkansas

INTRODUCTION

As a not-for-profit business, Arkansas Electric Cooperative Corporation (AECC) is much more than just the "local electric company." Based in Little Rock, AECC was created in 1949 to provide reliable, affordable wholesale electricity to the state's 17 electric distribution cooperatives that encompass more than 60 percent of the land area in Arkansas. AECC is one of the top generation and transmission cooperatives in the nation, with assets of about $l.8 billion and annual energy sales of about $767 million.

Working in conjunction with AECC is Arkansas Electric Cooperatives, Inc. (AECI). This diversified statewide cooperative provides services such as construction, right-of-way maintenance, electrical equipment sales, high voltage equipment testing, governmental affairs, safety and loss control and communications. The utility sales department warehouse of AECI maintains a multi-million inventory to serve its customers quickly and has yearly revenues of about $110 million. Together, AECC, AECI, and the member distribution cooperatives branded as the Electric Cooperatives of Arkansas, represent the second largest privately-owned organization in Arkansas.

"Readily available access to the applications and data on our IBM i system is critical in delivering business and financial reports for AECC/AECI and providing sales support for our utility sales division," said Barbara Harris, Director of IT Business and Financial Systems for AECC/AECI. "Should those systems go offline, having a proven, tested backup and recovery plan would be crucial."

For AECC/AECI, any downtime is a setback for their commitment to excellent service, accurate and timely business reports and sales support.

Several years ago, in planned efforts to step up disaster recovery readiness, a second IBM Power server was purchased to ensure reduced downtime in the event of business disruption. Disaster struck before the new backup system was installed. A water leak damaged an existing IBM Power server, putting hardware and stored data at risk.

A component of AECC/AECI's IT infrastructure now suffered downtime. To complicate matters, the insurance company insisted a recovery attempt be made using existing compromised equipment before approval would be given for replacement. In the meantime, AECC/AECI had to rely on a custom backup solution for the IBM i to restore uptime through the backup machine.

Offering a wide range of business continuity solutions including risk mitigation and protection of critical assets, Strategic Technologies assisted in getting the backup machine installed and running. Strategic has been the technology partner of choice to AECC/AECI for more than 25 years.

Sharon Davis of Strategic Technologies offered her assessment of the situation. "The water leak is a prime example of real-world, unplanned events that occur more often than a dreaded natural disaster such as a tornado. Small incidents are very disruptive. AECC/AECI's IT department had meticulously studied, reviewed and discussed recovery services. Yet, pure happenstance intervened prior to implementation."

As soon as the most recent backup tape was delivered from the offsite storage facility, data restoration began. Fortunately, the existing backup procedure worked with only a loss of a few hours of critical data—amounting to a day and half of downtime. Unfortunately, restoration from backups caused delays due to the slow method employed by the insurance company to completely restore the IT infrastructure to full production.

During this time, replication software was presented as a solution, but the decision was delayed for further study. However, the demands for real-time accuracy and availability of data continued to escalate. Harris determined the custom manual backup solution was no longer adequate.

What if a system disaster occurred? If disaster did strike, could AECC/AECI's IT disaster recovery process be reliable enough to ensure zero downtime for the IBM i server and applications?

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AECC/AECI CHOOSES A DISASTER RECOVERY PLAN

Sharon Davis and her technical team met with AECC/AECI and formulated a plan of action. Since AECC/AECI's disaster recovery challenges included aging hardware and manual downloads and uploads of backup tape, Strategic's customized plan included iTERA software because of its automated capabilities and ease of use.

AECC/AECI's existing maintenance contract was up for renewal and Strategic's plan would also leverage the timing of this expense. In fact, the new solution offered significant savings that allowed AECC/AECI to deploy those resources toward a technology refresh and advanced software tools to improve management, audit and monitoring availability.

STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGIES' SOLUTIONS DELIVERS BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND PEACE OF MIND

"Because we are an energy and services provider, our critical data has to remain on premise. The new systems provide a reliable way to help ensure business continuity. With our new system in place, backup is now completely automated through iTERA," said Harris.

iTERA software can eliminate or reduce planned and unplanned downtime. The software's capabilities also include rollover-ready maintenance and automated, real-time replication of the production environment to a backup server with zero data loss and backup-verified communication. iTERA creates true peace of mind through validation of high availability readiness without impacting the production server with system health checks, updates, tune-ups, and timely accounting reports.

Information security has never been more visible or vulnerable than it is today. For the first time in our economic history, there is much more to worry about than a system disaster or an occasional natural disaster.

Acts of terrorism, employee sabotage and computer hackers have brought companies to a standstill. Yet, the choices for assistance in planning for and recovering from downtime are few, especially if experts are required in midrange and distributed computing.

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Strategic Technology has the know-how, the facilities, and the implementation experience to make business continuity solutions happen. The organization has IBM Certified Sales and Technical Support Staff across multiple platforms, hardware and software. Certifications include those from HP, Microsoft, Cisco, Novell and VMware.

Strategic also has a wide range of administrative support services. The company has successfully combined the three P's of business continuity – people, place, and process – into an affordable, custom capability exclusively focused on the continuity and recovery needs of companies of all sizes.

ABOUT STRATEGIC TECHNOLOGIES

Founded in 1993 by Sharon Davis, Strategic Technologies Corporation is an Arkansas-based provider of advanced technology solutions and Disaster Recovery Services. Their clients include many of the region's largest and most respected private and publically held corporations, with a range of industries that include banking, healthcare, manufacturing, government utilities, and distribution. Strategic Technologies Corporation is recognized by International Business Machines (IBM) as a premiere provider and is in the elite top 5% of all technology organizations worldwide.   Strategic Technologies has a proven record of success and is ready and tested in the critical services needed for recovery from a business disruption.

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Want to learn more about our Backup and Disaster Recovery Solutions?

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