



One of the world's largest insurance companies chooses Zerto to ensure IT availability

Overview

One of the world's largest insurance companies, with thousands of employees and a global network of more than 150 subsidiaries, branch offices and agents, relies on Zerto to protect its critical workloads.

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Challenges

- Organization needed a disaster recovery solution that allows for geo-diversity of datacenters
- New approach for DR was needed to enable the usage of Azure as disaster recovery (DR) site
- Ability for application owners to conduct DR testing
- Some highly transactional database servers had too much load to be protected with backups

Solution

- Successful migration of DR datacenter to Frankfurt with improved DR capabilities, including RPOs of seconds
- Usage of Azure as a DR site in the North America, South Africa, and in the future, China
- DR reports for compliance with ability to perform tests during working hours in the week
- Long-term retention for applications with high loads into Azure
- Ability to meet China's data governance requirements by leveraging Zerto with Microsoft Azure Cloud

Zerto Results

- Able to automate manual and error-prone parts of the DR process
- Synchronous replication was replaced, reducing the risk of bad data being replicated
- DR testing is now easily possible with a few clicks and can be conducted during the workweek with no impact on production environments
- Large budget savings for disaster recovery by leveraging public cloud instead of managing on-premises datacenters

The challenge: ensuring DR over long distances in the cloud

The long-established market leader operates its own main datacenter at a company site in Germany, as well as three larger datacenters in North America, South Africa, and Australia, together with numerous additional local installations at smaller sites.

In the past, the company relied on synchronous mirroring for DR, which meant data was replicated locally and stored remotely, with sites identical at all times. However, due to some external changes, its original DR location that it shared with another organization was no longer a viable option. The company was faced with the decision to simply replace the now obsolete DR datacenter with a new one or to modernize with a completely new approach to DR.

After careful consideration, the company decided to move away from its previous strategy and instead rent a new primary datacenter in Frankfurt/Main, in close proximity to local AWS and Microsoft Azure cloud datacenters. The organisation's cloud strategy was critical for the future of the business, but the distance to Frankfurt meant synchronous mirroring was no longer an option for protecting its workloads. To solve the problem, the company sought out technology alternatives that could ensure exceptional disaster recovery capabilities, even over long distances, while also being able to meet the recovery point objectives (RPO) and recovery time objectives (RTO) service level agreements required of their business. These core requirements drove an evaluation process of a number of key solutions on the market.

Zerto offers the solution

Two options were tested first: VMware Site Recovery Manager and Commvault's Life Sync. The insurance company explains the initial tests: "Both solutions failed quickly based on our requirements, so we decided to take a closer look at Zerto. After subsequent tests, we were very impressed with the solution and decided to do a more comprehensive evaluation in a 'bubble.' We invited users and owners of specific applications to test the solution and their applications were replicated and spun up successfully in the bubble environment. This test ran for two weeks and users reported that the new solution worked flawlessly and was easy to use even for non-specialist business users. It is also very useful that Zerto provides concrete reports after a DR test, which are used as proof that the process was successful."

More VMs were subsequently protected with Zerto in the new Frankfurt environment, enabling geographic redundancy. In addition, the North America branch office was able to replicate their critical workloads to Azure, which is closely integrated with Zerto. The use of public cloud, which generally uses resources efficiently and offers more flexibility, has a specific advantage when it comes to DR: Simple data storage in Azure is relatively inexpensive, and compute costs are only incurred in the event of a disruption or test, i.e., when the VMs stored there have to be booted.

Since then, 500 of the insurance company's mission-critical applications in Germany and North America have been protected with Zerto. This covers all core applications for data intelligence, including the enterprise resource planning

In the future, Zerto will also be used for long-term data retention in addition to disaster recovery, such as Zerto's backup function. Backups cannot keep up with the high load of our SQL databases. In addition, backing up SQL requires a lot of manual administration, which we hope to reduce by using Zerto. As a result, we have removed individual applications that were already running in Frankfurt from the normal backup process and automatically backed them up for 30 days in the cloud in Frankfurt via Zerto's long-term retention feature.

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system, which is a special SAP adaptation for the insurance industry, as well as database servers and application servers. In the future, workloads in South Africa and Australia will also be protected with Zerto, as will the insurer's "China bubble."

Deploying Zerto in China to meet data governance requirements

Zerto's close integration with Azure was also key to the insurance company's China bubble installation. Since local regulations in China do not allow sovereign data to be replicated or stored outside of the country, the insurer is also preparing to leverage Azure's public cloud in China. This will include a major expansion of its own infrastructure in China and leveraging Azure locally for DR via Zerto. As Azure clouds function identically in each region, new instances no longer need to undergo internal cloud assessment and the provider can leave data within China and still manage it from Germany.

Switch to asynchronous mirroring brings advantages

The insurance company's legacy use of synchronous mirroring required all changes to be immediately written to the DR side as well. This limited control over checkpoints and also risked bad data being replicated to the DR site. As a result, disasters such as ransomware had the potential to cause significant damage. However, Zerto's asynchronous replication provides version control, giving the IT team the ability to configure the length of the journal history and retain up to 30 days of checkpoints. In addition, in comparison to the legacy daily backups, Zerto provides RPOs of seconds.

Zerto also helps with long term retention for database servers with high load

The insurer's IT team installed Zerto itself and praised the simplicity. The System Manager for Virtualization and Disaster Recovery commented: "The installation of Zerto was impressively simple, fast, and no comparison to the complicated installation processes of other vendors. We were up and running in an hour and could start the first DR tests.

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Conclusion

The team for virtualization and disaster recovery manages thousands of VMs globally, with mission-critical applications being protected by Zerto - both in the company's own cloud and in China. The company was able to move away from synchronous replication and is now able to conduct DR-testing easily and automate large parts of the process. Altogether, this results in impressive cost savings, as explained by the System Manager for Virtualization and Disaster Recovery: "Zerto impressed us right from the start and is helping tremendously to ensure disaster recovery across multiple distributed infrastructures. It also gives us flexibility to easily move or migrate workloads. And with long-term retention, we will have plenty of opportunities in the future to take advantage of Zerto's benefits including reducing the time and effort required for backups".

About Zerto

Zerto, a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company, empowers customers to run an always-on business by simplifying the protection, recovery, and mobility of on-premises and cloud applications. Built for enterprise scale, Zerto's simple, software-only solution uses continuous data protection to eliminate the risks and complexity of modernization and cloud adoption. www.zerto.com