

Zerto Enables Better Operations for Large Insurance Company

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Introduction

A large insurance company has a significant amount of its operations in regions vulnerable to large-scale natural disasters and other weather hazards, so preparing for disasters is critical. To protect its business and customers from all types of disruptions and disasters, the company has centralized the data that used to be stored independently in each state into a hardened datacenter in its home office and replicated the data in a dedicated disaster recovery site. In addition, the company has deployed the data protection platform from Zerto Inc. of Boston, Mass., to further enhance its business continuity operations and to simplify moving workloads seamlessly across its sites.

Built on a foundation of continuous data protection (CDP), the Zerto platform combines disaster recovery and backup in a single converged solution engineered to save time and resources and reduce costs. By combining CDP with journal-based recovery, the platform allows organizations to rewind to any point in time with seconds of granularity up to 30 days in the past, avoiding the exposure to hours of data loss with traditional "snapshot" periodic backup. Advanced analytics, combined with intelligent dashboards and live reports, allows managers to ensure that business service levels and compliance needs are being met.

Before deploying the Zerto platform, the company had no instant failover disaster recovery. It depended on a traditional backup solution with data stored in a dedicated datacenter, which required several manual processes that would need to be managed. With this setup, a disaster recovery test would take more than a week and would require more than two days just to recover a server. With the Zerto platform, the company can complete the restore in less than an hour and a half and start testing the same day, finishing everything within 24 hours and saving 3,000 hours of downtime.

Because of the time involved, this insurance company was previously limited to one disaster recovery test a year. Now it runs a disaster recovery test once a quarter and a subsequent test once a month to verify there are no issues. If a problem is found, the company can correct it immediately rather than waiting up to a year. In addition, the platform has made two IT staff members and six other individuals involved with disaster recovery 25% more productive when it comes to disaster recovery-related activities while reducing the number of people needed in support.

Business Value Highlights

ORGANIZATION:

Large insurance company

LOCATION:

United States

CHALLENGE:

To improve the disaster recovery and backup operations for the entire organization

SOLUTION:

Zerto

KEY BENEFITS:

- » Time-efficient disaster recovery tests and restores
- » 97% reduction in RTO and 99% reduction in RPO
- » Quicker workload migrations
- » 25% more productive IT staff
- » Approximately 1.5x return on investment

To quantify these business benefits, IDC interviewed an enterprise data management supervisor at this insurance company and asked a series of questions about the investment involved and the various benefits realized. From the results, IDC projected a five-year return on investment (ROI) from the deployment of about 1.5x.

Implementation

In replacing its legacy backup system, the insurance company evaluated a number of alternatives before choosing the Zerto platform. "We had heard about Zerto from local vendors who mentioned superfast recovery point objectives (RPOs) and recovery time objectives (RTOs)," the supervisor said. "We finally decided to run a proof-of-concept (POC) test with two virtual machines (VMs), using the platform to move data from one datacenter to another. The test convinced us that the Zerto platform was the right choice."

For the initial setup, the company worked with the Zerto account team, which provided the POC software and a link to download it. "They gave us a key and a small Excel spreadsheet stating how many machines and IP addresses we needed," the supervisor said. "They then sat with us for an hour on a WebEx call to help with the setup. It's the only implementation help we've needed. We went from the POC test to production without changing anything other than license keys."

Zerto's support continues to be valuable. "We've had some technical issues that we've been able to work through with them," the supervisor said. "Nothing major, but if I have a question or if we run into an issue, we're able to open up a support ticket and get a quick response. Many times, we're able to resolve a problem simply by searching through their knowledge base."

Initially, the company's deployment strategy was to protect a small subset of very important machines. "Once we saw how easy it was to implement, we went from a handful of machines to about 350 very quickly and without issues," the supervisor said. "Zerto was able to handle the ramp-up without any problems."

Along with the expansion, the insurance company has upgraded the platform continually from the initial version 4.0 to the current version 8.0 to take advantage of improved analytics, better monitoring and reporting capabilities, and enhanced scaling and performance features. "As long as I pay my maintenance, the new features are free, which is a bonus compared to other vendors who usually charge extra for the additional capabilities," the supervisor said.

Zerto has proven an easy sell with management. "My boss used to say that data are the jewels of the company and knowing they are safe means he can sleep at night," the supervisor said. "When we need to add licenses, I simply explain what we need, why we need it, and what it will cost. I get no comments such as 'Do we really need this?' or 'Have you checked out other products?' Instead, it's 'Let's go ahead,' which is rather unusual."

Having done the proof of concept with Zerto, the supervisor would recommend it for others. "Zerto is very willing to help with the installation," the supervisor said. "If you're not impressed by the results, I would be surprised. I don't see anything on the market that would cause us to even entertain switching. I would rate Zerto a 10 out of 10."

Benefits

Deployment of the Zerto platform has transformed business continuity operations at this insurance company, bringing greater simplicity, agility, and efficiency to its disaster recovery and workload migration processes while minimizing downtime and the potential for data loss.

Previously, the company was limited to conducting one disaster recovery test a year. "Now, we do a disaster recovery test once a quarter and a subsequent test once a month to verify there are no issues," the supervisor said. "If we find a problem, we can correct it immediately."

Testing is now faster, and downtime has been reduced significantly. Using the previous backup solution, the company needed five days to conduct a disaster recovery test and two days to do restores. "Now we do the restore in an hour and a half, so we can start testing the same day and finish everything within 24 hours," the supervisor said. "We also shorten the downtime from two weeks to two days. We bring the machines up on day one, and we're ready to begin testing by lunchtime. By the end of day two, we're done, saving 3,000 hours of downtime."

By shortening the company's RTO and RPO substantially, the Zerto platform has further reduced downtime, avoiding the resultant productivity loss and potential harm to the company's reputation and customer satisfaction. It has also minimized the risk of data loss.

Previously, the RTO was 48 hours, and only 75% of data recovery efforts were completed within that time. The RTO has been reduced to 1.5 hours, and all data recovery efforts are now completed on time. The staff time needed for data recovery has been cut from 96 hours to 90 minutes. In addition, the RPO has been reduced from 23 hours to 5 to 6 seconds.

The Zerto platform also places fewer demands on IT and other staff. Members of the supervisor's team and six other individuals involved with disaster recovery have become 25% more productive when it comes to disaster recovery activities, and fewer people are needed to support those activities. "On a weekend, I don't need a server person, a network person, and a storage person," the supervisor said. "It can just be myself and one other person to verify that the machine is up and running."

Zerto is also much easier to use than the previous system, which was Java based and took considerable time going from screen to screen. "I can bring up Zerto and start recovering, failing over, or testing machines in the time it took to log in to the earlier system," the supervisor said.

Moving workloads with the Zerto platform is simpler than before and requires less time and fewer people. "I recently had to migrate a 5TB virtual machine in the state office in Mississippi to our disaster recovery site," the supervisor said. "Doing this with the previous system would have required a lengthy, manual process with lots of downtime. With Zerto, we completed the task in 15 minutes over the weekend with minimal downtime."

Overall, the Zerto platform makes it much easier for the three people on the enterprise data management team to run the company's 364 VMs with 78TB of data and know that the data is accurate and secure. "We don't have to wait for an annual disaster recovery test to find out if there's an issue," the supervisor said.

"At any time, I could fail over half the VMs into a test bubble to verify that they are working properly without impacting anyone. Within a couple of hours, I have a report showing that we not only have the protection shown on the dashboard

but fully confirmed in VMware that everything is up and running," the supervisor said. "If we find a problem, it gets fixed immediately. We've also been able to identify other issues that we would have missed without doing these tests."

Return-on-Investment Analysis

From interviews with the supervisor, IDC was able to quantify the benefits and investment associated with the Zerto deployment and to determine the ROI and payback period for the investment. IDC calculates the ROI period in a three-step process:

1. Measure the productivity benefits and cost savings since deployment.
2. Ascertain the total investment.
3. Determine the investment and benefits over five years and calculate the ROI, which is the five-year net present value of the benefits divided by the discounted investment. To account for the time value of money, IDC bases the ROI calculations on a 12% discounted cash flow.

For the two members of the IT staff who were 25% more productive because of the Zerto platform, IDC calculates that the average annual productivity savings amounted to about \$50,000 when projected over five years. With the six other staff members involved with data recovery, who were also 25% more productive, the projected average savings amounted to \$149,375 per year over five years. Reducing data recovery from 400 hours to 6 hours generated an average of \$20,870 in annual savings over five years.

From these savings, IDC projects a five-year ROI for the Zerto platform of around 1.5x.

About the Analyst



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Harsh V. Singh is a Senior Research Analyst for the Business Value Strategy Practice, responsible for developing return-on-investment (ROI) and cost-savings analysis on enterprise technological products. Mr. Singh's work covers various solutions that include datacenter hardware, enterprise software, and cloud-based products and services. Mr. Singh's research focuses on the financial and operational impact these products have on organizations that deploy and adopt them.

MESSAGE FROM THE SPONSOR

Zerto helps customers accelerate IT transformation through a single, scalable platform for cloud data management and protection. Built for enterprise scale, Zerto's software-only platform uses continuous data protection to converge disaster recovery, backup, and data mobility and eliminate the risks and complexity of modernization and cloud adoption. Zerto enables an always-on customer experience by simplifying the protection, recovery, and mobility of applications and data across private, public, and hybrid clouds.

For more information on how continuous data protection sets a new standard to minimize data loss and ensure rapid recovery, read [Continuous Data Protection: A New Era of Backup and Recovery](#).

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