

Disaster recovery is high on the agenda: eHDF study



Organisations in the Middle East are paying more attention to disaster recovery than ever before, according to the findings of the 'Second Middle East Business Survey'.

The survey, which was initiated by eHosting DataFort (eHDF) in conjunction with UAE-based business continuity management (BCM) consultancy Continuity and Resilience, found that 57% of the responding organisations aim to implement a DR solution between the production site and disaster recover (DR) site.

Nearly 25% of respondents, who were

either organisation decision makers or senior managers, said they plan to use an external data centre service provider for their production and DR site, while 39% said the need for DR seats is likely to emerge within the next two years.

According to the study, which focused on BCM, 16% of organisations reported at least one significant business disruption in the last year, with hardware and software failures, power failure, application infrastructure failure and site outages cited as the most common.

Close to 21% of the organisations have had a robust BCM programme in place for the last three years, while 14% have started maintaining and exercising their business continuity plan. However, 65% admitted to having either no concrete plans to initiate a BCM programme or are still at different stages of implementation in the BCM lifecycle.

Of those that are still in different phases of this lifecycle, many are doing it without adopting a holistic BCM program, as only

half said they conduct IT-DR drills.

The report also showed that organisations are not happy with their current IT condition – over half rated their BCM readiness, IT-DR readiness and crisis management as average or below average. Perhaps more concerning, 65% were not sure of the overall reliability of their current IT backup and recovery systems and procedures.

However, the maturity of BCM and DR readiness still needs to improve and the report indicates that companies are inclined to seek the expertise of service providers for this purpose," he added.

Dhiraj Lal, executive director at Continuity and Resilience, said that despite a lot of companies cutting IT budgets this year, they should be aware that investing in BCM and DR is very affordable.

"When you've prepared in advance, you actually don't have to invest that much in DR or BCM. In most organisations you don't need to recover more than 20%. So you can save a lot of money by being smart and only integrating what you need to, rather than everything. The other thing is, once the IT investments are made, the rest is not expensive. It's effort, but it's not mega money in investment," he said. ■

Growing social media presence in GCC pushes governments online

Governments in the GCC are realising the influence of social media and looking to drastically increase their use of it, says Fadi Salem, director and fellow at Dubai School of Government and speaker at the upcoming GCC Government Social Media Summit, which governments across the GCC will attend.

"Government attitudes to social media are changing. They recognise that, like the Internet this will become an essential part of how they operate," Salem said.

"Attitudes are changing. At one time social media was distrusted, today, governments are starting to recognise its potential as a communication tool," he added.

2011 saw the influence of social media reach new heights in the Middle East by aiding the mobilisation of citizens in the

Arab Spring and being used to rally people against governments.

Highness Sheikh Mohammed bin Rashid Al Maktoum embraced its use years ago. However, Salem said, it has taken governments a while to follow his lead.

"Government departments are very concerned with privacy and cautious of new technologies so it will take time for widespread use but a change in attitudes is now coming," he said.

The GCC Government Social Media Summit will run from 9-12 April in Dubai. According to representative, Communications staff will gain a 'crash course' in social media and learn how they can implement social media best practice.

"The summit has come at a timely moment in the development of social

media use. It is an excellent way for government staff to increase their knowledge on social media tools and techniques," Salem said.

Emirates eGovernment and Dubai and Abu Dhabi Police are government entities that are already using social media as a medium to interact with residents.

"In 2010 we started collaborating with government entities to produce policy guidelines on how to use social media effectively to maximise the value delivered to the public and manage potential risks and concerns attached with using social media," said Ibrahim El Badawi from Emirates eGovernment.

"We launched the guidelines in early 2011 and have seen high interest from UAE government entities," he added. ■