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Middle East firms encouraged to employ disaster recovery

Firms in the Middle East are running the risk of losing vital data and revenue due to a lack of disaster recovery management, according to industry experts.

When a firm experiences downtime on any of its vital IT systems, it can haemorrhage money. In order to stop this, certain failsafe plans can be put in place. 'If you look at any company, in order for their operations to remain active, you have to make sure the IT systems are up and running,' Sachin Bhardwaj, head of business development and marketing, eHosting DataFort, tells AMEinfo.com.

'If you are a bank, for example, the banking systems or ATM systems have to be up and running on a 24/7 basis so they have to make sure that customers who use the ATM don't suffer and there is no downtime. So we can check the risks in their enterprise and how they can mitigate those risks,' Bhardwaj adds.

IT system thresholds deemed crucial
A crucial stage of avoiding downtime is to check the specific thresholds of IT systems, establishing which can afford occasional downtime and which must be online constantly.

The problem of data loss is a common one. 'Last year we did a survey on how companies are reacting to business continuity and disaster recovery. We found out that 74% of companies we interviewed had experienced some hardware failure in terms of data loss and that translates onto their business,' reveals Bhardwaj.

However despite the problem being widespread and seemingly quite common, educating companies on the benefits of disaster recovery planning is still an issue. 'A lot of companies don't see the need for disaster recovery. A lot of firms are doing day back up and this is very common so they don't see the need for a high level solution where there is no down time,' Wouter Vancoppenolle, regional sales director, eastern Europe, Middle East and Africa, Double Take Software, tells AMEinfo.com.

'In enterprises you will find it of course but medium and small sized companies are quite happy with the solutions they have today. So our challenge is to educate them on the need for it and why you need this type of solution for their particular project,' Vancopponolle adds.

Bhardwaj believes that awareness is there for companies, although it is not yet at the necessary level to be truly effective. 'I think awareness is there, people have the basic processes but they don't look at it end to end. Companies need to look at it from the CEO down. There has been

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a major uptake in the last few years, we are seeing some of the more advanced organisations take it up and once they have started doing it, we will see this trickle down to smaller companies, ' he states.

Power shortages cause IT havoc

Parts of the Middle East have been prone to power shortages in recent years and this can have a disruptive influence on a company's IT systems. Recently power outages in the emirate of Sharjah in the UAE have affected businesses badly. 'Power is just one part of it, in Sharjah there were major outages and businesses lost a lot of money because they couldn't operate. Their systems went down and they couldn't work with their suppliers or customers. So what we have is a data centre infrastructure and there can never be a single point of failure, it is backed up by a UPS and a generator so it won't fail.'

'Typically what happens is in an office most people have power from a single source, if that power goes down then your server and your desktop will go down, so because of the power shortage we have a data centre which is fully independent, there is no single point of failure. There is power coming from two sources so even if it goes down from one source, there is still one up and running,' he adds.

Another issue revolves around the IT spend of companies and whether they are willing to pay the money to install the disaster recovery systems, particularly as companies are still feeling the effects of the recession. 'Budgeting is a problem; budgets are smaller now so this is also a challenge but a financial one,' states Vancoppenolle.