

## **More than Money: Business Continuity Keeps Financial Institutions Up & Running**

### **Business continuity: an essential IT strategy**

Next to money, customer data is the lifeblood of a financial institution. Unfortunately, a financial institution's data is at its most vulnerable state when its doors close for the night or when extenuating circumstances prevent it from doing business. However, customers expect the ability to access their account information when they need it, regardless of the time of day or circumstances surrounding them. And, government regulations are forcing financial institutions to be more vigilant about the customer data they store on a network. In order to ensure that customer data is secure and accessible no matter the situation, business continuity solutions have quickly become an essential element of a financial institution's IT strategy.

Business continuity involves the implementation of data and network infrastructure solutions that allow an organization's operations to continue undisturbed even in times of distress. This can range from natural disasters or power failures, to network outages or hacker attacks. Financial institutions are realizing the need for these solutions, not only because government regulations are mandating them, but also because it allows customers the continued access to personal data that they increasingly require.

### **Regulating business continuity**

Evolutions in government regulations emphasize the fact that the protection of consumer data is paramount. You just need to look to the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) to understand how the way we manage private information has changed in recent years. The penalties for non-compliance are severe.

The same rules apply to the financial industry, which is driving the ongoing need for institutions to have a solid business continuity plan in place. For example, the Payment Card Industry (PCI) Data Security Standards (DSS) are heavily enforced. According to the Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act (GLBA), if one piece of customer information is lost or stolen, a financial institution can pay up to \$100,000 in fines per occurrence. And, the liability goes beyond the institution alone. Officers and directors of the financial institutions can be forced to pay up to \$10,000 per occurrence in fines out of their own pockets.

### **Testing the network: Does it effectively store data?**

The primary mistake that financial institutions make when it comes to business continuity is underestimating the sheer amount of data that must be stored. All too often, institutions try to store data themselves on-site. However, the infrastructure of most internal networks cannot handle the amount of data that must be managed. An inadequate network with an overflow of data will inevitably run slowly, preventing customers from being able to access their information in a timely

manner. For this reason, data center colocation is often a necessary component of a financial institution's business continuity solution.

Data center colocation serves as an extra data center. These off-site locations provide the space and speed that can be unobtainable on-site without a complete overhaul of a company's network. A colocation solution allows financial institutions to back up data, restore it, and protect it in order to mitigate risks.

### **Business continuity beyond the data center**

While outsourcing to a data center is one way to build a solid business continuity plan, institutions cannot ignore their internal network. There are issues to be aware of, such as protecting against malware intrusions and ensuring that network connections are diverse and redundant. Addressing these issues can help to effectively protect your network, as well as reinforce it to create high-speed access with little or no delays.

PAETEC's Fixed Wireless network is an effective and efficient solution for a network in a metropolitan area. The diversity that exists on a wireless network is able to eliminate single points of failure. This means that if a network is disabled at one point, it's still able to link up at a different point in order to complete the data transfer. This airborne method of data transfer is similar to grounded, fiber-based wire networks, but the wireless network is faster and able to connect at points that are more direct. This results in faster speeds with greater diversity, and a decreased chance for a network disconnection.

### **Implementing business continuity with help from PAETEC**

PAETEC provides the solutions that are essential to mitigate the risk involved when it comes to ensuring continued and immediate access to customer data. For example, PAETEC will perform a network assessment free-of-charge that helps financial institutions understand how their networks are structured, the vulnerabilities that are present, and the solutions that will help secure those vulnerabilities while ensuring that they're compliant with current regulations.

Implementing a business continuity plan can be a major investment. Therefore, along with PAETEC's free network assessment, the company also has two unique programs—Equipment for Services (EFS) and Software for Services (SFS)—that were created to help financial institutions afford the solutions they need to implement a business continuity plan. Institutions can subsidize the cost of equipment and software, as well as receive reimbursements and upfront capital from the federal government.

Since 1998, PAETEC has funded more than \$90 million in network equipment and software costs for more than 4,800 customers. Because of this support, customers are able to comply with government regulations while modernizing their networks to ensure that their businesses continue to run properly.

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For an industry that deals with data as vital as personal financial information, business continuity is one of the most important plans an institution can have in place. Government regulations and customer demand has forced financial institutions to recognize the importance of business continuity solutions. PAETEC can help these organizations understand how the appropriate network infrastructure allows for the implementation of an effective business continuity plan.

**For more information**

[To learn more about PAETEC's Business Continuity Solutions, click here to download a brochure with more information.](#)