NIFTY Cloud's DR service used to protect mission-critical systems from unexpected disasters

Networld Corporation

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Manager of Information Systems Office
Shojiro Morinaga

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Assistant Manager of Information Systems Office
Toshiyuki Shimizu

Client’s objectives

- Shorten the DR site startup time
- Create an environment that allows anyone to easily switch to the DR site

Reasons for choosing NIFTY Cloud

- A DR site can be configured with a simple VM replication
- The procedure for launching the DR site is easy
- It is easy to start using without an agent
- Data backup is simplified

Networld installed NIFTY Cloud’s DR service with VMware vCloud® Air™ Technology, which allows a DR (disaster recovery) site to be configured inexpensively and quickly without requiring a great deal of time or effort so that adoption, backup, and failback would be easy when transferring their mission-critical systems to Dell EMC’s hyper-converged infrastructure VxRail. Doing this completely eliminated all the apprehensions they had about their obsolete DR server, which had been set up 5 years earlier. They plan to use it for other systems in the future, such as their quoting system.

Achieving the company’s objectives

- Simple procedure for switching to the DR site
- Cut the time needed for data backup in half
Setting up a DR site takes time, and timely switch over when a disaster occurs is difficult

Networld, a company that provides advanced IT products to its customers, has accumulated a great deal of knowhow by using focused products, and offers its customers proposals and deployment support. One of the products the company is currently focusing on is hyper-converged infrastructure. These are integrated environments that combine a server, storage, hypervisor, and network into a single appliance. By incorporating multiple products, the usual verifications and adjustments are unnecessary, shortening the deployment lead time and simplifying management. The hyper-converged infrastructure the company values most is Dell EMC’s VxRail. In 2015, the majority of the company’s more than 400 employees transferred their mission-critical systems used daily for sales orders, purchases, accounts receivable, accounts payable, and inventory management to VxRail.

Around this same time, NIFTY (now Fujitsu Cloud Technologies) and OEM partnered up to resell NIFTY Cloud as a Networld cloud service. These negotiations led to the company learning about DR service with VMware vCloud Air™ Technology (hereinafter “DR service”), which allows NIFTY Cloud to back up the VMware environment to the cloud quickly and easily, and they decided to deploy it. There were reasons the company decided so quickly to deploy the DR service. Mainly, there was some apprehension about the company’s existing DR site. Toshiyuki Shimizu, Assistant Manager of Networld’s Information Systems Office, explains: “Our Tokyo head office was not operational in June 2011 after the Tohoku earthquake and tsunami, and we launched a DR site in our west Japan branch. However, the restoration procedure was complex and more than 5 years had passed since the site had been set up, so we were uncertain about whether it would actually work when needed.”

Both backup and failback are inexpensive and fast

NIFTY Cloud’s DR service uses VMware vCloud’Availability for vCloud Director®, making cloud replication from the existing VMware environment possible just with the click of a mouse. In the event of an emergency, the DR site can easily be launched from the existing vCenter Server or NIFTY Cloud, or by calling the support center. Failback following recovery of the primary site can be achieved easily using the same process as the creation of the replication. After the company learned about the DR service, it investigated other similar services. However, Shojiro Morinaga, Manager of Networld’s Information Systems Office, says that there wasn’t anything better on the market: “The DR service, which fully transfers the VM (virtual machine) environment using the VxRail functionality, wasn’t available anywhere else. No agent is needed, deployment is simple, and the DR site is activated just by logging in from each location and starting the server. Not only is the DR site indispensable, but it is also insurance for us, and the cost wasn’t that great. For these reasons, the NIFTY Cloud DR service can be deployed relatively inexpensively.”

High user-friendliness leads to plans for use in other systems

The company currently uses three of its eight core servers to replicate all the DB data and the primary environment. Mr. Morinaga gives the following reasoning: “We envisioned a state in which the Tokyo head office was not operational, and if that were the case, the Tokyo employees wouldn’t have a place to work. The systems would have to be used from other locations.” The company’s environment required about 3 hours for the initial replication of 80GB. The DB server has a capacity of 2TB, so this took about 12 hours to finish. The DB server automatically backed up the differential data every 12 hours, while everything else was backed up every 8 hours. Conventional differential backups require time and effort to merge the differential data with the original data, so a full backup was carried out each time. 3 to 4 hours was needed for 1 DB just to compress the data being sent, and roughly 12 hours a day was spent on the process from data extraction to transfer completion. This timespan has been cut almost in half (*the length of time is not uniform*). Mr. Shimizu had the following to say about the advantages of the DR service: “We just have a lot less to worry about. We were always concerned about whether or not the DR server would actually work in the event of an emergency. We no longer have to worry about that, and our operations are also taken care of, so we have peace of mind.” Thankfully, the DR service hasn’t actually been needed yet, but the company plans to perform an annual test. Mr. Morinaga states, “We plan to clarify procedures for a variety of cases, such as working from other company bases or from the homes of our Tokyo employees, and carry out full-fledged tests of our company servers crashing.”

Regarding the NIFTY Cloud DR service, Mr. Morinaga said, “We didn’t think it would be this convenient,” and the company values it so highly that they are also making arrangements to use it for the company’s quoting system. Their partner companies are reviewing its application in their quoting systems as well. The company is also starting to provide solutions that incorporate both VxRail and the DR service. NIFTY Cloud’s DR service has now become an integral part of the company’s business in just half a year from its deployment.