

UNPLANNED DOWNTIME BIGGEST IT CONCERN FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

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More small to medium sized businesses than larger firms have had to make use of their disaster recovery plan, yet 43% of SMEs have no business continuity solution in place

Bracknell, UK, December 17th, 2003 - New industry research commissioned by Dell has found that unplanned downtime is the biggest IT management concern for UK SMEs (small to medium enterprises). Even though almost a quarter of the SMEs surveyed (comprising companies with 51-250 employees) cited unplanned downtime as their number one issue, more than 43% of them still have no disaster recovery plan in place to address this problem.

This is despite the fact that a third of the SMEs that do have a disaster recovery plan have had to make use of it - nine per cent more the larger sized organisations surveyed (companies with 250 or more employees) - and that nine of out ten believe the investment in a business continuity solution was well worth the investment.

Steve Lewis, Director of Enterprise Business, Dell UK, says: "Smaller firms often have limited IT resources which means implementing a business continuity solution is not always a business priority. However, loss of data can have dramatic consequences and the impact can be just as hard-hitting for small and medium sized companies, if not more so, than it is for larger organisations. This research shows that one in three SMEs with a disaster recovery plan in place have had to use it, indicating how vital they are at protecting corporate data."

Only 66% of SMEs have conducted risk assessment or disaster recovery testing, almost a fifth less than larger sized companies.

The main reasons all firms gave for not implementing a disaster recovery plan was that it was not considered a business priority, suggesting a more reactive approach to protecting their corporate data. More than one in ten of all firms surveyed said that they did not have the resources to implement a solution, closely followed by those that either didn't know how to implement a business continuity solution or didn't know whom to contact for advice.

Key findings for SMEs include:

- Unplanned downtime is the biggest IT management concern with almost a quarter of SMEs citing this as their number one issue. Back up is the second largest concern for a fifth of SMEs;
- Only 26% of SMEs with a disaster recovery plan know how much it costs to implement their solution -

12% less than large organisations surveyed;

- 10% more SMEs have a disaster recovery solution in place for their customer information than large businesses;

- The majority of SMEs use tape (62%) and back up software (52%) to protect their systems;

- Those SMEs who do carry out risk assessments or disaster recovery testing do so every nine and a half months on average;

Key findings for all businesses surveyed include:

- 40% of the companies that have not implemented a business continuity solution have looked into disaster recovery in the past year, and 39% have not looked into it at all;

- Firms spend an average of 8.3% of their IT budgets on disaster recovery;

- 43% are spending the same amount and nearly one in five have reduced spend on their disaster recovery / business continuity solution;

- Databases are considered the single most mission-critical application to all companies surveyed;

- The main factors considered when putting together a disaster recovery solution are how to restore data, how and where to store the data and the cost involved.

Lewis comments, "We are helping small and medium sized businesses protect themselves by offering low-cost, scalable solutions - based on industry standard products - with excellent support. Customers can implement highly available solutions, providing the business continuance that they require at a fraction of the cost of a proprietary solution."

The research was conducted by TNS Business Services between the 22nd October and the 5th November 2003. Two hundred telephone interviews were conducted within the UK across all industry sectors. One hundred of the interviews were with companies that have 51-250 employees, whilst the other half took place with companies that have 250 employees or more. Two thirds of the respondents were IT managers.

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