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Carlsberg

Probably the best failover solution

Carlsberg Group ensures availability of key IT systems with solution planned and implemented by Polestar.

Carlsberg UK

Carlsberg's Leeds Brewery

Carlsberg's Leeds operation is one of the company's two major breweries in the UK. The facility brews all of the company's major brands, including Tetley's, around the clock, with total production of 3 million hectolitres of beer each year.

The operation of the Leeds brewery is very dependent on its IT systems. It's imperative that the IT system works effectively to ensure the optimisation of all operations and is a major factor in delivering an efficient and world-class brewery.

The SCADA system

One key IT system is called SCADA, which is the user interface for brewery control. SCADA allows users to manage all of the physical systems that enable the plant to function. Over the last five years SCADA has failed twice, both times through hardware faults. On each occasion it has taken Carlsberg's system engineers between two and four hours to replace the hardware and reinstate the system. Whilst SCADA was inactive, brewing operations ground to a halt.

An interruption to the brewery's operation can be most easily represented by the potential loss in beer production. Four hours interruption to brewing is equivalent to a loss in production of approximately 190,000 litres of beer.

The Polestar solution

A decision was made to upgrade SCADA and at the same time ensure that the new system would never again suffer from significant interruptions to service.

Graeme Walker, senior systems engineer at the Leeds brewery, commented on the replacement project, "The failover mechanism within the new SCADA system did not match our requirements so we decided to look at an external solution. We initially considered a Microsoft cluster but it seemed very complex and the cost was prohibitive.

Polestar, our IT partner, recommended that we take a look at the data replication and failover capabilities of Double-Take Software."

Using Double-Take software, Polestar developed a procedure for replication, and provided Carlsberg with continuous real-time data replication, offering both high resiliency and high availability of the network and data.

Company:

Carlsberg - www.carlsberg.co.uk

Business:

Carlsberg Group
Carlsberg is one of the leading brewing groups in the world, with a large portfolio of beer and soft drinks brands. Its flagship brand - Carlsberg - is one of the fastest-growing and best-known beer brands in the world. More than 30,000 people work for Carlsberg at 92 local production sites in 48 countries, and its products are sold in more than 150 markets. In 2005 Carlsberg sold more than 100 million hectolitres of beer, which is about 83 million bottles of beer a day.

Customer challenges:

In the event that production servers fail, failover to a target server enables users to carry on working with little or no interruption to service.

Polestar solution:

Polestar developed and implemented a functional, reliable, failover solution utilising Double-Take software to ensure high-availability of Carlsberg's critical systems.

Customer benefits:

Carlsberg can enjoy simplified maintenance of their server and guaranteed availability of SCADA – their mission critical system. Backups no longer interfere with production performance allowing for back-ups to be made during normal working hours.

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Project implementation

Carlsberg ran a trial of this solution at the Leeds brewery using a model of the proposed high availability infrastructure. Carlsberg used a variety of methods to recreate realistic failure scenarios, causing the production server to fail and tested the failover process and monitored the data integrity.

Graeme Walker recalls the trials, "In every test, the solution set up by Polestar successfully failed over and failed back seamlessly. After the trials were completed we had no hesitation in giving Polestar the green light to implement the full solution."

Carlsberg have five production servers which are connected to two central servers. This is then used as the main repository for all server databases, pictures, recipes etc. Polestar implemented Double-Take software to replicate data between the central servers and provide a guaranteed failover window of less than two minutes.

Graeme Walker explains, "Because the Polestar solution works so well we have derived a number of additional benefits. For example, - maintenance of our servers has been greatly simplified. If we need to investigate problems, install patches and implement server or software upgrades, we manually failover to the target units, leaving us free to work on the production servers without compromising performance.

Also because we have two identical datasets, we are able run our tape backup from the target servers. This means that the backup process doesn't interfere with production performance and we are able to run the backups during standard working hours."

Carlsberg have worked with Polestar to ensure the protection of their mission critical data through continuous real-time replication. With supplies of 'probably the best lager in the world' at stake, Carlsberg couldn't afford to leave their business continuity plans to chance. Through their choice of the Double-Take solution at their Leeds brewery, Carlsberg now has total confidence that their brewing processes will not be interrupted by IT failures, thus assuring the continuity of supply to retailers and the nation's beer drinkers.

Graeme Walker concluded, -

"For Carlsberg, the main benefit has been guaranteed availability of a critical system, SCADA. We are extremely happy with the Polestar solution; it was implemented on time and within budget, and has delivered everything we expected and more."

About Polestar

Polestar Interactive Limited has been providing computer network consultancy, configuration and support since March 1998. As such, Polestar has extensive experience of implementing and managing IT solutions and is, amongst others, a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, a Cisco Registered Partner and an HP partner.

Polestar specialises in network integration, network maintenance, network support and network security. We are dedicated to delivering the best solutions to our customers through working closely with you to develop an understanding of the individual needs of your business. Our aim is to use our expertise and experience to help you get the maximum return on your investment in your IT infrastructure.

Polestar can provide high quality, bespoke "all-in-one" IT technical support solutions. We can install the required technology, set up secure connectivity, proactively manage critical systems, and provide ongoing IT support and network monitoring. In short, we act as a virtual IT department but with no salaries to pay or staff to manage -- just a predictable, monthly cost that helps you stay in control of your budget. Our service and support is centered on our customer's needs, allowing for an excellent understanding of the customer's business and for a mutually beneficial working relationship to develop.

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