Case Study:
Mundi Westport Group

Critical Issue

Mundi Westport Group's AIX-based systems operate around the clock. But what happens if something goes wrong with the production server? If the company depended only on nightly tape-based backups, recovery times would be unacceptable. What's more, recovery from tape would be incomplete. Any data updates applied during the day would not be on the previous night's backup and, therefore, might be lost.

In addition, tape-based backups are designed to recover data after a disaster. They do little or nothing to solve the much more frequent "oops moments" when someone accidentally deletes data or when a glitch corrupts data. Mundi Westport Group needed a way to solve these problems.

Results
- Can quickly switch to the real-time replica server if necessary
- Can recover data to any point-in-time
- Can rollback the replica server for problem-solving purposes
- Incurs little or no day-to-day administration burden

Business Challenge

Mundi Westport Group sends the orders it receives to a warehouse where the necessary items are picked, scanned into the system and packed into boxes. The information collected during this process is used to bill customers and to track shipments. If Mundi Westport Group's systems are unavailable, the company cannot complete these activities.

Downtime is costly for the company. During the busy season, which lasts from July until November, the company typically ships 5,000 to 10,000 cartons a day. Last October alone, it packed more than 150,000 cartons.

Beyond the threat of downtime, the company must also protect its critical data. Like most companies, Mundi Westport Group performs nightly backups. However, if the company's online data were destroyed just before a new backup tape was to be created, a full day's worth of data could be lost because it would not yet be captured on any backup tape.

In addition to resolving this backup latency issue, the company also wanted a way to recover from the most frequent data problem— corrupted or accidentally deleted data. Neither online data nor nightly backup tapes provided much help because the ideal solution is to recover data to its state just before the problem occurred, which rarely coincided with the time when the last backup tape was created.

Client profile

Mundi Westport Group

- Small leather goods manufacturer and distributor
- Needs to keep its systems running 24 x 7
- In the event of a disaster, needs to be able to recover data not captured on the nightly backup tapes.

> "It's a really great tool for restoring things that are accidentally deleted. It's also great for testing. If something goes wrong, we can set the backup system to 10 minutes before and step it through to see what happens."
>
> – Bill Rossi,
> Consultant to Mundi Westport Group

Solution

About five years ago, Mundi Westport Group looked at an option for overcoming these data backup challenges. However, the product that the company evaluated was costly and more than what was needed. Furthermore, it would not allow them to recover data to any point-in-time during the day.

Almost a year ago, Mundi Westport Group found the solution it was looking for: Assure MIMIX DR for AIX, from Precisely. Assure MIMIX DR for AIX replicates data in Mundi Westport Group's post-relational UniVerse database on a production AIX-based server to a UniVerse database on a replica AIX server. Now, if there is a problem on the primary server, the company can quickly switchover to the backup server and continue operations with minimal disruption.

In addition to near real-time replication, Assure MIMIX DR for AIX also provides Continuous Data Protection (CDP). CDP stores enough information on each data update such that Assure MIMIX DR can restore data items to a specific point-in-time. This allows Mundi Westport Group to recover from mishaps that happen occasionally, such as data being corrupted or accidentally deleted.

Mundi Westport Group also uses the CDP feature to help in problem solving. If something goes wrong in one of its applications, IT staff can rollback the backup server to a point just before the problem occurred. They can then step through updates to track down the problem.

The company is also looking at gaining additional benefits from its Assure MIMIX DR for AIX solution. On the last day of each month, Mundi WestportGroup creates several month-end reports, a process that takes two to three hours. Currently, the company runs the reports after-hours and then rolls the system over to the next month so people can start work the next morning.

Mundi Westport Group is looking at ways to run the reports on the backup system during the day, without disrupting primary operations, so people will no longer have to stay late to run the month-end routines.

During the evaluation process, Mundi Westport Group worried that Assure MIMIX DR for AIX might not be an appropriate solution for a small to medium-sized business like itself. But the company found it to be an excellent fit. "I think it's a good solution for anyone who wants to be confident that their data is backed up and safe and they can get at it on an as-needed basis," said Kathy Thomsen, MIS director at Mundi Westport Group.

Technology used
- Assure MIMIX DR for AIX
- IBM AIX
- UniVerse database
- Custom-developed applications
- 2 x IBM Power 520 servers (one production, one backup)