



Macro 4 chooses Vizioncore's vRanger Pro for Disaster Recovery – and gets so much more...

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THE SITUATION

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THE SOLUTION

Macro 4 adopted a virtualization strategy for production and R&D purposes, with vRanger Pro from Vizioncore Inc. playing a key role in allowing them to quickly and cost effectively enact a backup and restore strategy for their virtualized environment.

THE RESULTS

“Our backup strategy works because we can schedule the frequency and regularity of backups with vRanger Pro, and we are confident that we can quickly restore the entire VMDK and data quickly.”

Steve Bossen
Manager Internal Systems
Macro 4, Inc.

THE SITUATION

As global businesses have come to depend on business-critical applications, the need to protect against unscheduled disasters has moved to the top of many companies' priority lists. Two years ago, Macro 4, a leading developer and supplier of systems software solutions, began taking proactive action to ensure availability of critical applications in the event of disaster or other type of failure. After researching several methodologies, Macro 4 adopted a virtualization strategy for production and R&D purposes, with esxRanger™ from Vizioncore Inc. playing a key role in allowing them to quickly and cost effectively enact a backup and restore strategy for their virtualized environment.

Established in 1968, Macro 4 plc (LSE: MAO.L), who are headquartered in the UK, sells its BIL (Business Information Logistics) and SMP (Systems Management Products) solutions through subsidiary offices in Benelux, France, Germany, Italy, Spain, Switzerland, and the United States. Macro 4 boasts an impressive install base covering more than 60 percent of Fortune 100 companies with market penetration in all geographies around the world. (See www.macro4.com.)

THE SOLUTION

In January 2005, Macro 4 appointed Andy Jones as their new Disaster Recovery Project Manager. Andy's 17 years experience in the Group I.S Division at Macro 4 gave him the necessary skills to meet the challenges of ensuring that the company's business-critical applications could quickly be recovered in the event of a major outage. With data centers at Macro 4's UK Crawley headquarters and at Parsippany, New Jersey; it was quickly agreed that both sites would become mirror disaster recovery sites for each other. Andy began working closely with U.S. colleague Steve Bossen to identify how best to proceed. Although Macro 4 operates a heterogeneous R&D environment, including an IBM® zSeries® mainframe and numerous UNIX platforms, over 99 percent of their business support applications including CRM, financials, sales forecasting and web services, ran on Windows® or Linux platforms.

“Vizioncore tools mean we can quickly keep up with VMware’s next generation of virtualization products without severely impacting critical application availability. With higher levels of performance and redundancy, we expect to leverage the full benefits of virtualization to the Macro 4 business.”

Andy Jones
Disaster Recovery Project Manager
Macro 4 plc

During 2005, the company’s new virtualization strategy became widely accepted across the Macro 4 Group. ESX Server from VMware, the leading provider of production-ready virtualization software, was chosen as its virtualization platform. Macro 4 quickly realized that virtualizing their Windows-based and Linux-based applications meant that redeployment on the other side of the Atlantic was a much more cost effective way of backing up their business critical applications. Following the successful installation of VMware® ESX Server, the company began a limited virtual machine deployment program and, well, the rest, as they say, is history.

“We could not believe how quickly we saw the benefits. Virtualization surpassed all our expectations and delivered an ROI we had only read about. It wasn’t long before we had virtualized all our production applications,” said Andy Jones, who added that Macro 4 standardized on IBM BladeCenter® technology to support the virtualized environment. Macro 4 now operates more than 100 production virtual machines across multiple IBM blade servers – the majority of these virtual machines are regularly backed up with Vizioncore’s vRanger Pro. The result has been flawless uptime for the virtualized applications.

Macro 4 first looked into vRanger Pro at the suggestion of VMware. Vizioncore Inc. is a leading partner of VMware and provides a suite of software products that enhance VMware Infrastructure. vRanger Pro is the industry leading hot backup solution for VMware that provides full bare-metal image backups for the virtual machines on an ESX Server to greatly simplify the restore process.

“vRanger Pro was definitely part of the equation in being able to support our virtual machines successfully,” said Jones. “As we were predominantly Windows technicians, we had no significant scripting experience. The Windows-based GUI in vRanger Pro was absolutely key in allowing us to quickly put a comprehensive backup strategy in place.”

THE RESULTS

Today, Macro 4’s Group I.S Division backs up in excess of 50 virtual machines per night, snapping “C” drives with vRanger Pro for image-level backups and using a third-party backup solution for data drive file-level backups. However, since vRanger Pro recently introduced a file-level restore capability, Macro 4 is now considering using this feature to round out its existing backup policies.

Since transitioning to the virtual environment, the Group I.S Division has not experienced any significant outages for their applications. “Our backup strategy works because we can schedule the frequency and regularity of backups with vRanger Pro, and we are confident that we can quickly restore the entire VMDK and data quickly,” said Bossen.

With such success, the Group I.S Division has moved beyond supporting the business applications with disaster recovery and now provisions virtual machine platforms for their R&D group. “The R&D developers were initially wary of running virtual, but were soon convinced that virtual machines could support their needs and in a much shorter timeframe. If they need to develop on Red Hat® or Novell® SUSE®, we can now provision new resources in minutes versus the weeks it used to take to complete the purchase process,” stated Jones.

In addition, the Customer Support staff and Group I.S Division can quickly set up training instances to bring customers and staff up to speed on new products. Other advantages gained by Macro 4 include significantly improved utilization of servers and SANs in their data center with some VMware ESX servers hosting up to 10 virtual machines each. Hardware maintenance costs were reduced because fewer purchases of new hardware were required.

Today, Macro 4 virtualizes all new applications as a default instead of making new hardware acquisitions. While disaster recovery is still a high priority, their current focus is on business continuity and performance enhancements. Vizioncore’s products figure in their strategy for moving forward with these objectives. Macro 4 is looking to acquire the full suite of Vizioncore products, adding esxCharter™ to collect performance metrics, esxReplicator™ for full replication of virtual machines, and esxMigrator™, Macro 4’s migration tool of choice when moving to the VMware Infrastructure 3 platform.

“Virtualization has delivered a number of significant benefits to our business, way beyond what we had originally anticipated,” said Jones. “Vizioncore tools mean we can quickly keep up with VMware’s next generation of virtualization products without severely impacting critical application availability. With higher levels of performance and redundancy, we expect to leverage the full benefits of virtualization to the Macro 4 business.”



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