KENT RELIANCE BUILDING SOCIETY

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Kent Reliance Building Society (KRBS) manages assets of over 2.3 billion pounds and offers a range of financial products and financial expertise to its members, who are located throughout the United Kingdom.

THE BUSINESS NEED

The fastest growing building society in the UK, KRBS has evolved from a regional to a national provider of financial services to a rapidly expanding membership base. This growth both in the size and complexity of its business has resulted in a dramatic rise in the volume of data KRBS manages and safeguards and an escalating dependence upon its core banking systems and their continuity. "We reached a point where we simply couldn't maintain the status quo from five years ago. We needed to ramp up our operations, a major piece of that being modernizing our disaster recovery (DR) capabilities," says Steve Dockrell, IT Manager for KRBS.

KRBS had implemented a traditional once-daily backup of all data pertaining to customer account activity and every mortgage managed by each of the four mortgage companies controlled by KRBS. That data was stored on a single IBM i server, located on-site, copied to tape at the end of each business day and delivered via courier to a remote location.

In the event of disaster, a DR company KRBS had contracted with would provide the company with access to its IBM i server, enabling Dockrell and his group to restore their data from the tape.

"We really had no true DR system in place," says Dockrell. "First, it would probably have taken more than 24 hours for us to get our systems back up. Second, had a disaster occurred mid-day, with our last backup being from the night before we could potentially have lost that morning's work – permanently."

THE DECISION

KRBS believed it had addressed its HA/DR modernization needs 6 months earlier, when the company made a significant investment in a leading-brand HA/DR software solution. However, that solution proved to be prohibitively expensive to implement and difficult for IT staff to understand and manage. KRBS subsequently approached Silverlake Technology, an IT consulting company, for guidance on selecting a new solution. Its requirements were straightforward: the solution had to be easy to implement, intuitive and require minimal KRBS investment and staff intervention. It also had to run on the IBM Power i platform,

as KRBS had purchased a new IBM Power i server, freeing its old server to be used for the purpose of HA/DR.

According to John Wake, Technical Director for Silverlake, his challenge was to demonstrate enough value - both in initial cost savings and in terms of implementation and day-to-day administration and support - to justify replacing the previous solution. "What KRBS discovered in Maxava HA Enterprise was an easy-to-implement, robust solution written for the most recent versions of IBM i. It has an extremely intuitive user interface, allowing users to add libraries and files with little demand on KRBS' IT staff. It's straightforward to use, and easy to understand."

KRBS selected Maxava HA Enterprise, which was implemented by Silverlake in Q1 2008.

THE OUTCOME

In addition to ensuring that members' data is secured up to the last transaction and that KRBS is meeting any FSA requirements in terms of data recovery and business continuity, Maxava has helped KRBS reduce potential downtime to a minimum without loss of data. Switching can be achieved in minutes, rather than hours and is virtually effortless. "Any delay is only because I'd need to move people to different locations, not because of Maxava," says Dockrell. "We know our data is being replicated in real-time to our remote server, and that we'll be up and running very, very quickly."

As Silverlake promised, Dockrell and his staff have very little daily interaction with Maxava HA Enterprise, other than periodic checks of the replication. And while KRBS has thankfully had no cause as yet to put Maxava HA Enterprise to the test Dockrell believes having it as an insurance policy of-sorts - working in the background, just in case – enables KRBS to deliver a necessary measure of security and confidence befitting of a financial institution doing business on a national scale. "As the number of customers we're accountable to grows, so does the amount of data we're responsible for. With Maxava HA Enterprise, we know that as data is written on the primary machine, a second copy is maintained on a second system. That gives us, our customers, and investors peace-of-mind."

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