KANTION

Australasian Banking Group Eliminates Replication Backlogs and Streamlines Switch Testing with Assure QuickEDD

Critical Issue

Trust. It is what underpins the success of any bank. Financial strength and security are, of course, key to building that trust. But much more is required. Customers expect instant, 24/7 access to their accounts and services, with absolute, real-time information accuracy. Put simply, any problems with a bank's IT systems that impact their customer's experience will inevitably erode trust and the bank's business prospects.

Due to rapid growth and expansion across Australasia, increasing volumes of branch office, online and ATM transactions began to overwhelm the replication capacity of a large regional bank's existing high availability and disaster recovery (HA/DR) solution, with data replication at one of their data centers lagging behind by as much as one to two days.

Results

- Replication backlogs eliminated, with backup systems staying current to within just a few seconds

- Replication handled across the same communication links as customer-facing systems, with no impact on web page response times

- No longer dependent upon expensive outside services for HA/DR system management, maintenance or switch testing

K Overview

Company:
Leading Banking Group in Australasia

Industry:
Full-service personal and business banking and financial services

Business Environment:
- Serves thousands of customers through over 80 branch and ATM locations
- Provides Banking and credit card services, home and business loans, and international banking services.

Syncsort Product:
Assure QuickEDD

Implementation Partner:
Kantion Pty Ltd.

- Vastly reduced planned downtime and labor for switch testing

Technologies

- Syncsort Assure QuickEDD

- IBM i production and backup systems

Business Challenge

Like any major bank with multi-national operations and thousands of customers, this multi-national banking group has a stellar reputation to uphold. Their IT operations must perform at world-class levels, not just for customer service and financial safety, but also in terms of compliance with the extremely strict regulations and fiduciary requirements in many countries.

So when they realized that significant data could be lost if their existing high availability solution was lagging behind at the moment a disaster occurred, it was imperative to fix the issue immediately. Upon review, they found they actually had several problems, all of which needed to be resolved.

First, as designed, their HA/DR solution would replicate the entire IBM i journal whenever any customer transaction occurred, including a customer simply checking the balance in their account. This caused a huge amount of data to be replicated to the backup environment, which completely overwhelmed both their available communications bandwidth and their backup systems' ability to apply the changes. The net result was extreme replication latency, with the backup data at one data center lagging from one to two days behind the data on the production systems which it was supposed to be protecting.

In addition, replication for that data center was managed across the same dedicated internet link used by their customer-facing systems, which resulted in slow web page response times for their customers. Their existing solution vendor recommended that they contract for an additional, separate communication link, just to handle the HA/DR replication load. But even this additional bandwidth did not resolve the problem.

Beyond this, during switch testing, they had to bring in the vendor's technical support reps to stop and start replication. Stopping replication would take three to four hours, before the switch test could even be run. Once the test was complete, they would then have to fully restore all the data from tape. Finally, the vendor would have to reset the system configuration to resume replication, a process which required an additional six to seven hours.

Overall, switch testing required up to 15 hours of planned downtime and incurred significant chargeable vendor services.

Making matters worse, because the HA/DR system did not have an administrative console or UI, the banking group's IT team did not have any useful visibility into replication status details. They were totally dependent upon the vendor's technical support representatives for solution maintenance or to identify and fix any replication issues, incurring further services costs.

As the banking group's CIO summarized it, "Not only was all this expensive and time consuming, but it was also impacting our customers and leaving us exposed to extreme risk of data loss in the event of an actual disaster."

The Solution

Because of their prior success using Syncsort's Assure Security Monitoring and Reporting solution, they looked to Syncsort's business partner Kantion Pty Ltd. for help with their DR problems. Kantion recommended Syncsort Assure QuickEDD.

Assure QuickEDD provides full-featured high availability and disaster recovery. Designed to protect critical IBM i applications and data against loss and downtime simply and efficiently, Assure QuickEDD delivers fast, no-lock synchronization and real-time replication,

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synchronization audits and customizable switch procedures that can be managed through 5250 screens or a graphical interface.

Working with the banking group's IT team, Kantion provided a full proof of concept for Assure QuickEDD on the group's current systems. Installation and configuration took only a couple of hours, after which a full sync was completed in less than four hours. That same day, the Assure QuickEDD operations console showed that latency between source and target was only two minutes for the most at-risk systems, compared to four hours for their existing HA solution.

Soon after, Assure QuickEDD was implemented across the banking group's systems. Installed and in-synch in less than a day, Assure QuickEDD brought replication lag time for their systems down to just three or four seconds.

In addition, the group's IT team were able to perform their own "white test" switch over, which took only minutes instead of 15 hours, highlighting Quick-EDD's ease of use. In the past, switch tests involving the seriously-lagging data center consistently showed that they simply could not achieve their Recovery Time Objective (RTO) of thirty minutes, much less guarantee against data loss.

Once the results were in, the group's Technology Services Manager expressed deep relief. "Allowing DR replication to lag hours behind production is such a huge risk. It is frightening to imagine the impacts of losing that much data."

And he especially enjoys the fact that he and his team have detailed visibility into Assure QuickEDD's performance and can dig down to identify and resolve any replication issues which may arise. "Whenever we experienced replication

problems in the past, we had to contact the vendor and wait for them to investigate and fix the system. noted. We had no visibility into cause of the problem, and no way to audit or control the hours charged for the service."

As a bonus, the banking group experienced an additional significant cost savings of nearly AUD $18,000 per year (USD$ 13,000). As their CIO explained, "Not only did we eliminate the risk of losing hours of data, Assure QuickEDD runs so efficiently that we no longer need to pay for a separate internet connection just for DR. Everything runs on the same link, with no impact on the customer facing systems."

In addition, he noted that "Beyond the Assure QuickEDD solution itself, I'm very pleased with Kantion. From the moment we inquired with Kantion, on through the Proof of Concept and implementing Assure QuickEDD, their responsiveness and problem-focused approach made it clear that they are a partner upon whom we can trust. That's vital when the issue at hand is protecting our customers' money, and our business, from a disaster."

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About Kantion

Kantion Pty. Ltd. provides versatile DevOps, Data Assurance (security, disaster recovery, regulatory compliance) and IT operations automation software solutions for enterprises and organizations of all sizes, leveraging our expertise across IBM Power (IBM i, AIX), Windows, Linux, and Unix systems.

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