

Testing a recovery strategy is the only sure-fire way to see if a business continuity program can be successfully executed prior to an interruption. Many organizations choose to exercise their strategies on an annual basis, focusing on a variety of critical functions each year, ranging from data recovery and satellite communication to workplace and generator recovery. Regardless of the type of exercise, Agility's experienced personnel work with members at each point of the process to ensure a meaningful test experience.

UTAH HEALTHCARE PROVIDER

Test conducted at Agility's Atlanta facility in April 2008.

In the end, communication was seen as the backbone of this robust test for a Utah-based healthcare provider. The ambitious exercise was meant to determine the realistic recovery timeframes for five critical servers and a custom automated call distribution (ACD) phone solution.

The experience taught the member about the need for effective communication in determining priorities and objectives among the on-site IT staff and off-site management. Periodic conference calls with the Agility team and member's on-site and off-site staff resolved discrepancies and paved the way for a successful exercise. The outcomes of the experience are now a part of the member's business continuity program and future test exercises will challenge additional aspects of their operation.

INNOVATIVE BANK

Test conducted at Agility's Atlanta facility in March 2008.

Innovative Bank, a community bank with branches in California, did what many organizations do during their first test experience: start small. The team came in with a focus on critical goals and meeting regulatory requirements. They came out with the confidence they needed to move onto planning objectives for their next test.

The team used the opportunity to confirm their connection/ping to their home network and restore critical servers. The undertaking went as planned and the team successfully verified their procedures and timeframes. Part of the organization's next test will be to expand the exercise to other systems and establish connectivity with third-party organizations that are part of the bank's critical operations.

CENTRACT SETTLEMENT SERVICES

Two tests completed at Agility's Toronto facility in first quarter 2008.

Centract Settlement Services is the largest provider of collateral valuation and risk management solutions to Canadian mortgage lenders and brokers. As such, it's vital for the organization to be up-and-running and connected for employees, clients and partners to operate, no matter the situation.

In preparation for the test, Centract officials established a well-defined team that conducted weekly planning calls, which consisted of a report on the progress of open items, brainstorm on what hadn't been considered and a review of planning documents.

Both of Centract's recovery exercises were aggressive and involved live phone calls and transactions, all while management and customers observed. A few issues identified during the first endeavor were resolved or improved upon during the second, including the need for different or additional equipment. The experienced and organized team learned lessons from the exercise that they otherwise wouldn't have encountered until an actual disaster recovery.

PEOPLES SAVINGS BANK

Generator-only test in February 2008.

Peoples Savings Bank is a two-location community bank in Ohio whose management is primarily concerned with power outages affecting the bank's operations. As a result, the bank installed a power transfer switch at its branch location to allow a generator to power critical systems. With that intact, the organization chose to exercise its new capability with Agility.

The generator and transfer switch successfully powered the ATM, banking terminals, cameras and alarms, with a nearly seamless transition between land-based and generator power. The bank is now exploring the installation of a transfer switch for its main office. Also, Peoples Savings Bank management plans to test its Internet banking capabilities via Agility's satellite connectivity.

KINGSWAY FINANCIAL SERVICES

Regular on-site, off-site tests and mobile tests.

Kingsway Financial Services is a firm believer in business continuity preparedness and the value of testing. Although the company has an in-house business continuity planning team responsible for all locations, the company involves numerous business units and employees in its exercises, in an effort to gain as much knowledge as possible.

Kingsway officials have utilized all of Agility's testing options, including QuickShip, exercises at the Atlanta and Mississauga facilities, and mobile office setups at the location of their choosing. Through their experiences, the team has improved upon response times for data recovery, users' applications, phone system restoration and more.

The business continuity teams' preparation and review for each event makes their business continuity program stronger in the end.

FRANKLIN COUNTY SCHOOL EMPLOYEES FEDERAL CREDIT UNION

QuickShip test in February 2008.

Franklin County Schools Federal Credit Union in Columbus, Ohio, has no internal IT department, choosing to outsource the function. Nonetheless, the credit union wanted to put its data backup procedure to the test by recovering data on an Agility server. A server was shipped to the third-party IT provider and, with the help of Agility technicians, data was restored on the server. Though, through the process, the IT provider found some critical applications were not backed up. This has since been corrected and the team is preparing to challenge more variables in the coming year.

RELIANCE TRUST COMPANY

Atlanta-based investment company that tested Agility's in-line space capability in March 2008.

Reliance Trust Company was a perfect candidate to test Agility's in-line space capabilities, as its office has a parking deck instead of a parking lot, limiting mobile recovery options. In-line space (vacant retail stores in shopping centers), is Agility's newest recovery option. Two of the ReadySuite recovery elements, technology and connectivity, were set up in the space provided. The result was a fully-functional office space, complete with electricity, furniture and restrooms.

To increase the realism of the test, Reliance Trust's employees were only permitted to bring items in their own DR kits and homes. This resulted in great findings about files and software that were needed, but had not been considered at part of the DR plan. Regardless, Reliance Trust employees were able to confirm key points of their plan and identified improvements for their next test, including the need for a PC imaging strategy.