Lessons from Hurricane Ike

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Agenda

◆ Firm Background
◆ The Problem
◆ The Decision Process
◆ The System
◆ The Surprise Test
◆ Lessons Learned
◆ Advice to others
Gardere Wynne Sewell LLP is a 101-year old AmLaw 200 firm providing comprehensive litigation and business solutions for leading domestic and international companies, Fortune 500® corporations, and private businesses. With more than 250 lawyers in four offices - Austin, Dallas, Houston, and Mexico City - Gardere has 10 major practice groups that encompass the more than 45 practice areas, Gardere serves clients across a broad spectrum of industries and business sectors, including technology, financial services, energy, construction, manufacturing, real estate, private equity, hospitality and retail.
The Problem

◆ As a law firm, we don’t make products, deal with inventory, or have supply issues; our product is knowledge. This knowledge is stored as documents. LOTS of documents.

◆ Documents have to be stored, both on paper and electronically.

◆ Documents have to be edited. Sometimes daily, sometimes yearly, but always readily available.

◆ Documents have to be preserved.
The Decision Process

Prior to 2006, all our data was backed up to tape

- Tape was slow
- Backups not readily available
- Media prone to errors

In 2006, we went to a cloud-type offline storage system

- Expensive
- Security concerns
- Control issues
The Decision Process

In late 2007, we moved to a disk based backup system

- Lower cost
- High availability
- Better control of data
- Better protection
The System

◆ Nov 2007, installation began

◆ Used a third party partner for the setup and installation of the system

◆ Installation hurdles:
  ● Third party company folded mid-install
  ● No pre-install training
  ● Inexperienced with best practices
The Surprise Test

Hurricane Ike Preparations

• All databases closed, backed up, and relocated
• Email failover to backup systems
• Telephone systems and networks rerouted
• Houston data center powered down
• Remote access increased
• Office building closed
The Surprise Test

Hurricane Ike Results

✓ No major damage to data center
✓ Office building closed for several days
✓ Many Houston users without power
✓ Some Houston users relocated to Dallas
✓ All databases restored and all services remapped back to Houston
Lessons Learned

- Backed up data is not always usable data
- Everything takes longer than you think
- Allow for a system that is flexible enough to make changes
- Do periodic testing of your DR and backup plans
- Trust your vendors and consultants
Advice To Others

- Don’t go live until you have tested, tested, and tested some more
- Always plan for more storage space than you think you need
- Discuss backup needs with Subject Matter Experts
- Document everything!
- Allow for training for administrators
Thank You

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