PRINCETON CONSULTANTS

Information Technology and Management Consulting

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Instituting Disaster Recovery Procedures at a Railcar Fleet Owner/Operator

North American Class-I railroads depend on one company to operate a pool of more than 200,000 railcars. Distributed among multiple railroads and constantly on the move across a network of 140,000 miles of track, these railcars transport more than 95 percent of all automotive vehicles shipped by rail, as well as containers, trailers, lumber, steel, paper, and many other goods and raw materials.

In addition to managing its railcar pool, the company provides the railroads with sophisticated financial- and operating-information technologies to help them manage their businesses. As a critical component of the freight transportation network in the U.S., Canada and Mexico, the company is charged with delivering high-quality, low-cost equipment—no matter the circumstances.

CHALLENGE

The company's leaders had determined that their operations could not adequately recover in the event of a disaster or business disruption event. They sought disaster recovery procedures and a robust business continuity plan (BCP). All business units and functions needed to be evaluated to understand criticality and loss-of-functionality tolerances, and to create the most appropriate recovery plans according to a Business Impact Analysis (BIA) and to be implemented with the selected BCP software.

APPROACH

The team from Princeton Consultants worked with each business unit to understand and confirm the business priorities established by the BIA and to challenge and validate the criticality of business functions performed, minimum and maximum loss-of-functionality tolerances, and the business impact of key data loss.

Based on the established priorities, the team conducted BCP development, which featured the creation and enhancement of existing business process documentation and process flow diagrams. In evaluating and understanding the company's IT

systems, the team built a complete model that included data model schema consisting of applications and sub-applications, programs and batch jobs, datafiles and datasets, sequencing, and recovery scenarios. The model helped create recovery procedures for the company's IT applications.

RESULTS

The successful completion of the company's first BCP yielded complete understanding of the recovery objectives and requirements for each business unit, and the steps needed to recover from business disruption and to resume critical business processes.

The company emphasized data replication and fallback and recovery procedures. Quarterly recovery exercises are conducted—years after the project's completion. Sufficient disaster recovery is currently estimated to take less than one hour.

Additionally, the evaluation and modeling of the IT systems sparked a major modernization initiative that included migration off the mainframe and the development of leading-edge operational systems.

ABOUT PRINCETON CONSULTANTS

Princeton Consultants helps railroad executives improve and refine strategy, process, organization and technology. We conduct comprehensive DR / BCP planning to assist risk management initiatives.

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