

10 things to consider for an Always-On SMB

IT organizations of all sizes are feeling the pressure to meet the demands of business, however smaller organizations don't always have the luxury of dedicated resources, unlimited budgets or the expertise to ensure the high level of Availability their stakeholders demand.

Data is the lifeline for small organizations. In the event of system downtime, access to critical information stops and business comes to a screeching halt. So, what's your plan to guarantee Availability of your systems and ensure business continuity?

As you look at solutions that promise Availability, here are some things to consider:

1. Assess your current situation

Evaluate your organization and determine what types of "incidences" could potentially be the most disruptive to your business. Do you have a plan? What about data growth? With the amount of storage you consume expected to increase 30-50% each year, how do you plan to manage that growth while ensuring 24/7 access to data and applications?

- Taking an initial assessment of your established processes can help you easily determine where the gaps may be in your strategy.

2. Give yourself time to evaluate

Becoming an Always-On Business™ requires a lot of effort. Make sure you truly understand your organizational needs so you can better map them with the right solution. Also, give yourself ample time to complete a proof-of-concept and save yourself from potential frustration down the road.

- Arm yourself with as much information as possible before purchasing.

3. Find solutions that leverage your existing IT investments

You've already invested in modern storage and virtualization, and maybe your cloud strategy is just now taking shape; you need an Availability solution that invests heavily in and works closely with these "other technologies" to deliver a more joint and cohesive solution.

- Finding a backup vendor is not enough. You need an Availability partner that has solid relationships with the hardware, software and service providers that you use to ensure you are getting the most out of your IT investments.

4. Determine which applications are critical. Hint: They all are, right?

Application downtime is an area where most IT departments report that the majority of end users are asking for improvements of some type**. And not all end-users have the same needs. What is critical to one part of the organization may not be critical to another and vice versa. We know that roughly 47% of IT organizations' current workloads are considered mission-critical and this number is expected to increase to over 52% in just the next two years**. Any downtime is unacceptable and is a limitation that many organizations have with their current solution.

- When selecting an Availability solution, you shouldn't have to choose which applications are critical – they must always be available.

5. Create your DR process and document it

You need the ability to get VM backups and replicas off site without the cost and complexity of building and maintaining an off-site infrastructure. Having a solution that provides a fully integrated, fast and secure way to backup, replicate and restore from the cloud is crucial in any DR strategy. The 3-2-1 rule states that you need to keep three copies of your data, stored on two types of media, with one copy being off site.

- Look for a solution that allows you to master the 3-2-1 rule without dumping money and resources into a second site or adding bandwidth.

6. Make sure your backup solution has high-speed recovery — do your homework.

From a single, agentless, image based backup, you should be able to quickly tackle virtually any recovery scenario including full VMs, guest-OS files and application objects when you need them. Advanced capabilities such as e-discovery and archiving are also key requirements.

- If a backup vendor makes claims about RTOs/RPOs, test them!

7. Practice your “just in case” recovery scenarios

IT directors report that only 5% of their backups are being tested*. We also know that only 45% of organizations even do any kind of backup testing. What good is backup if you can't recover the data?

- When choosing any backup solution, you need to ensure that you can guarantee the recovery of every VM, every time by having the ability to run automated recovery verification jobs.

8. Automate your monitoring and alerting

You need tools not only for backup and recovery of data, but also a solution that monitors health, troubleshoots performance, and helps you plan your backup infrastructure. In addition, you need deep analysis and monitoring of both your VMware vSphere and Microsoft Hyper-V infrastructures to uncover potential issues, which could potentially affect the performance of your backups and production applications.

- Make sure your solution not only backs up and recovers your data, but gives you complete visibility into your backup and virtual infrastructures as well.

9. Start small, then grow bigger

If you are a very small organization or have a small virtual environment, you need a solution that addresses all of your Availability needs at a price point you can afford. Make sure the backup solutions you are evaluating that claim to be “built for SMB” and are low in cost, are delivering the enterprise functionality you require while your business continues to grow.

- If functionality is missing from a solution built for SMB, that low sale price won't be worth it in the end.

10. Don't break the bank on multiple business continuity solutions — trust Veeam

Veeam® provides a worry-free and affordable solution that delivers the automation and reliability needed to ensure your business is always-on. With Veeam, you can:

- Leverage your IT investments in server virtualization and modern storage.
- Backup, recover, replicate and even extend your data center to the cloud.
- Recover a failed VM (virtual machine) in minutes.
- Test every backup, every time, before launch and ensure full recovery.
- Restore Microsoft Exchange, SharePoint, SQL Server and Active Directory quickly and easily.
- Start with our enterprise-grade SMB package and move up to our suite once your environment goes beyond six sockets.

For more information on Veeam Availability solutions for SMB, visit our website at <https://go.veeam.com/smb-na.html>

* Veeam Data Center Availability Report 2014

** 2016 Veeam Availability Report