



Keeping Your Business Running: Disaster Recovery, Managed Services, and Ways to Reduce Costs



Issue 8

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Welcome



We have all learned a lot working through this COVID-19 experience together, especially that we need to be prepared, both personally and professionally in supporting our business organizations. Everyone's health and safety will continue to be at the forefront of everything we do, but now many of us are being tasked with determining how best to attain cost efficiencies while delivering value to our end user communities.

This issue focuses on the things to consider in running your business cost effectively, and specific to the areas of Disaster Recovery, Business Continuity, the best ways to plan for unforeseen situations, and what we can learn from other leaders who have entrusted their IT needs to the Blue Hill team. **How to Best Prepare For The Unexpected** provides a high-level overview of the type of planning approach in assessing the potential risks your business may face in the future.

Security Strategies in Evaluating Data Center Services provides a lot of valuable information based on years of experience and expertise in delivering highly efficient data center production and DR services. This will help if you are considering a Managed Services Provider to provide the required security to meet your business needs.

In the Gartner research note "**Reduce Costs and Piggyback DR Investments,**" Gartner analysts **Ron Blair and Stuart Downes** discuss how DR is often a significant area that teams look to for cost optimization opportunities, and this is the intent of their research. They provide more than 20 ideas to help Infrastructure and Operations leaders reduce or optimize Disaster Recovery costs. Ideas span from fiscally frugal stopgaps, to the use of **DRaaS providers**, to partnering and piggybacking opportunities.

Our Customer Focus includes a company who chose well before the pandemic for cost saving and efficiency reasons, to not renew their office lease 18 months ago, and instead equipped their team with the ability to **Work-From-Home** (WFH), including relocating their IT infrastructure to Blue Hill/CAPS secure data center environment.

Another Customer Focus is in sharing the warm recognition we received from one of our County Governments, in working together because of the pandemic to complete a special project in a very short, pressurized timeframe, receiving their congratulations "**...to the team for their hard work and dedication in making this happen!**"

And we highlight 3 of our newest customers, **Higher Education, State Government, and Financial Services**, explaining **why they selected BLUE HILL** as their strategic partner for meeting their mission critical IT requirements.

We remain committed to delivering business value, cost effectively, and will continue to update our customers and our partners on how we are serving our customers and our community.

Sincerely,

John Lalli
Chief Operating Officer and Managing Director
Blue Hill Data Services

"20 ideas to help reduce or optimize Disaster Recovery costs."

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How to Best Prepare for The Unexpected: Assessing the Risk and Planning Accordingly

At some point in time we will look backward from COVID-19 to see how well prepared we were, where we fell short, and what we need to do to improve for a future that will surely see these types of crises occur again.

Executive sponsorship is critical. A high level of senior executive sponsorship is consistently identified as the single common denominator among companies having effective business continuity programs. Provide your executive team with a clear understanding of exactly where your program truly is today – what worked well and what did not, what needs improvement or expansion, and a road map to arrive at where you want to be.

In updating your Preparedness Plans, we recommend a foundational approach, including the surrounding capabilities that support it: Business Continuity Plans, Crisis Response Plans, Mass Communications capabilities, and testing for all of these.

Clearly an effective Business Continuity Plan is essential in today’s business environment. Recovery requirements must be established, strategies selected, and plans with the appropriate documentation assembled to meet those requirements.

Another part of the planning includes a Pandemic Plan, which is a special case of a Business Continuity Plan, meaning the two are interdependent.

In assessing the risk to your organization, a summarized Risk Assessment report includes 5 domains, which are carefully selected for the proven impact they have on a company’s ability to respond, communicate, and recover. These domains include Program Management, Planning, Business Continuity Preparation, Crisis Management Preparation, and Mass Communications.

Here are examples of assessment points describing varying results, separated by domain.

Domain	Assessment
Program Management	The executive team has provided funding to support an effective Business Continuity Program. However, no formal governance processes are being followed, nor are formal status reports being provided to the executive team for their review.
Pandemic Planning	ABC Company did not have a Pandemic Plan to guide response to the COVID- 19 event. However, the BC Plan did provide some guidance on requirements and strategies to be adopted. A Pandemic Plan should be developed.
Business Continuity Preparation	ABC Company has a well-prepared Business Continuity Plan that has been tested regularly. That plan employs proven recovery strategies yielding results to meet requirements. The Plan detail addresses elements of the recent Pandemic event.
Crisis Management Preparation	ABC Company has not developed a Crisis Management Plan nor does it have such a capability. Some employees have crisis management experience from their previous employers, and that experience should be built upon to produce a Plan.
Mass Communications	ABC Company does not use a mass communications tool. Instead they rely on “call trees” which proved to be out-of-date and ineffective during responses to the recent pandemic event.

“an effective Business Continuity Plan is essential in today’s business environment.”

70% of organizations are making disaster recovery decisions without any business-aligned data points.

Next Steps:

Contact us to learn more about the planning and tools we have available, in order to help build the roadmap to be able to quickly and effectively respond to immediate events, which is essential in today's world.

A full complement of these IT services is also available:

- Business Continuity Planning
- Disaster Recovery as a Services (DRaaS)
- Desktop as a Service (DaaS)
- Backup as a Service (BaaS)
- Dedicated Disaster Recovery services for Mainframe systems
- Dedicated Disaster Recovery services for Mid-range (AS/400-iSeries) systems
- Business Continuity Seats (dedicated and shared)
- Staff training
- Colocation and Fully Managed Services
- Applications Maintenance and Support

Source: Blue Hill

Research from Gartner:

Reduce Costs and Piggyback DR Investments

This research provides more than 20 ideas to help I&O leaders reduce or optimize disaster recovery costs. Ideas span from fiscally frugal stopgaps, to the use of DRaaS providers, to partnering and piggybacking opportunities.

Overview

Key Challenges

- Cost-focused initiatives regularly go awry due to misalignment of what is meant by “costs” and conflation of terms like “optimization” and “reduction.”
- New I&O leaders often discover the organization severely lacks both DR capabilities and funding.
- I&O leaders look to disaster recovery to help achieve cost reduction targets, but ideas are sparse.
- I&O leaders want to improve disaster recovery capabilities but face both funding and “tail wagging the dog” challenges.

Recommendations

Infrastructure and operations (I&O) leaders should:

- Perform prework to avoid all-too-common missteps by clearly defining “costs” and establishing a credible budgetary fact base via co-creation with business partners — avoid temptations to guess in isolation.
- Stimulate ideation by collaborating with peers via platforms like Peer Connect.
- Frugally fix serious DR capability deficiencies by first applying a stopgap and then keeping it simple via BaaS and DRaaS providers.
- Improve cost reduction impact by taking a “follow the money” approach and leveraging ideas in this research to seed ideation.
- Transcend “reduce” mode by partnering and piggybacking off of other strategic initiatives.

Strategic Planning Assumption

By 2025, 60% of I&O leaders who have demonstrably developed fiscally rightsized traditional disaster recovery capabilities will expand their role to address as-yet-unclaimed or newly emerging areas of IT resilience.

Introduction

Between now and 2025, there will be an abundance of opportunities for I&O leaders to expand the team’s value proposition well beyond existing disaster-recovery-related responsibilities. This includes areas spawned by digital products and multicloud deployments that have been to date underserved in terms of end-to-end recovery and resiliency. But before I&O leaders can earn a foundational role amid that white space, they must first earn a seat at the table by ensuring traditional capabilities are demonstrable and fiscally rightsized.

The challenge, however, is that although disaster recovery (DR) budgets were expected to increase in 2020, with 50% of organizations expecting to spend more than 7% of their IT budget on IT DR,¹ this changes quickly during fiscally challenging times. After travel, training, discretionary budgets and projects are slashed, disaster recovery is often the next area I&O teams look to for cost reduction or optimization opportunities. Naturally, teams want to gather some ideas on how to reduce DR costs or help with ideation, which is the intention of this research. But conflation of the terms “reduction” and “optimization” trip up many teams from the get-go as to what constitutes success. So, before having the team dive into ideation, start by determining the primary objective. Some typical examples include:

- **Frugally fix:** Existing capabilities are severely lacking and we can spend very little.
- **Reduce:** There is a mandate to reduce costs across the board, including DR.
- **Optimize:** There is a program, but there are some gaps between expectations and reality. The desire is to invest but do so creatively because incremental funding is limited and many related initiatives are afloat.

“I&O leaders look to disaster recovery to help achieve cost reduction targets.”

Create a gap analysis to compare business requirements against current reality.

The savings ideas presented in this research are framed around these three examples of frugally fix, reduce and optimize (see Figure 1).

Analysis

Perform Prework to Rightsize Spend by First Understanding Requirements

Gartner estimates 70% of organizations are making disaster recovery decisions without any business-aligned data points, or on the basis of an outdated business impact analysis (BIA). Without a fact base that the BIA provides, teams need to guess what level of DR is appropriate and what risks are tolerable. Inevitably this results in overspending or approaches that cause business requirements to be underserved. Avoid this mistake and have your team leverage or update the BIA, and then:

1. Create a gap analysis to compare business requirements against current reality. Use this to highlight deficiencies (where the business is currently underserved).
2. Leverage recovery time objective (RTO), recovery point objective (RPO), and other aspects such as seasonality from the BIA to identify where business requirements might be overserved (potentially overarchitected).

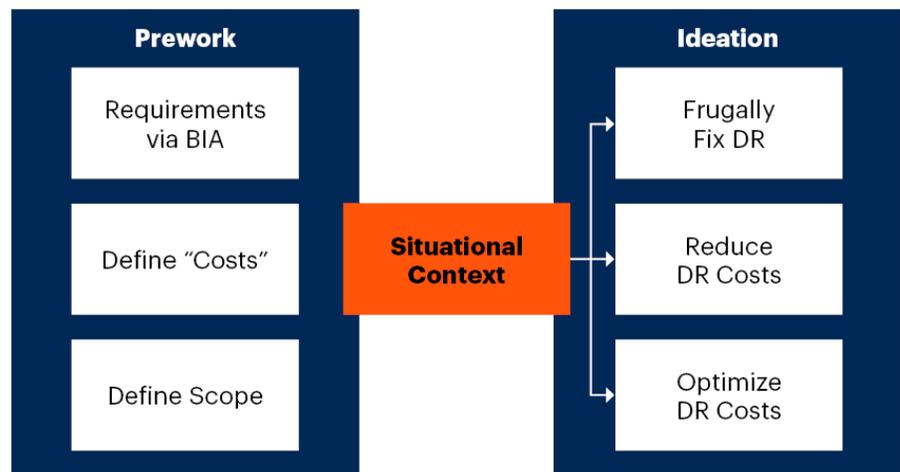
Define and Determine Scope

On countless occasions cost initiatives have gone astray as a result of misaligned definitions of “costs” or understanding of baseline or scope. Before the team dives into ideation, ensure alignment on the following:

- **Define costs:** Are you measuring cash flow or the P&L?
- **Define baseline:** Are you measuring against last year’s budget, this year’s planned budget, the latest rolling forecast, or the latest run rate?
- **Define target:** Is the goal actual in-year savings or is it to achieve what would be annualized savings come a certain date?
- **Understand costs:** Do you know your current costs for disaster recovery, including human capital?
- **Define whose costs:** Which idea would win out: one that provided \$100,000 savings to I&O or one that provided only \$50,000 savings to I&O but \$200,000 savings overall for the company?

FIGURE 1 Prework and Framing for Disaster Recovery Ideation

Prework and Framing for Disaster Recovery Ideation



Source: Gartner
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- **Define your staff strategy:** Do you want your people doing this kind of work? To what extent are these savings going to be factored into decision making?
- **Define the strategic context:** Are there other strategic initiatives this should be integrated with or can piggyback off of (e.g., infrastructure replatforming initiatives, cloud migration strategies or application modernization)?

Collaborate With Peers to Stimulate Ideation

This research provides several ideas for frugally fixing, reducing, and optimizing DR costs. But it is certainly not the end-all. In addition to requesting inquiry and document reviews by analysts, you are also encouraged to stimulate ideation with peers. A judgment-free thread was created on Peer Connect for this specific note. Help yourself and others by sharing ideas, successes, lessons from those actions that didn't go as expected, and things you are experimenting with to help reduce DR costs and improve overall IT resilience capabilities.

Frugally Fix DR Stopgap Data Bunker: "We Don't Have Capabilities and Can Spend Very Little"

Even organizations with robust DR programs should have a third copy of the data, stored off-site and preferably on a different media type. However, using the analogy of "platinum, gold, silver or bronze" service levels, having only the following options for DR is the equivalent to "coal." That stated, having these options is certainly better than having nothing. In this situation, simply getting the data off-site is paramount, even if it means ideal RTOs may not be achievable:

- **Push to object storage:** Traditionally it has been harder to recover from. But beyond being inexpensive it also has value from a storage perspective because it is immutable.
- **Use SATA storage:** Prices have come down considerably and have near parity with object storage. For just a tiny amount of money more than object storage, the ability to recover can be less burdensome.
- **Disk-to-disk vendor:** Disk-to-disk-to-tape is deployed by many organizations and tape is still the least expensive option — especially at PB scale. Historically, one of the largest knocks on tape was that recovery time was enormous.

But because of dual path processing, speeds have improved significantly since the days of LTO-7. For those without existing capabilities, a similar stopgap is to keep seven days of data on-site on disk and regularly vault the off-site data to a cloud provider or a vendor with backup as a service (BaaS) capabilities. The BaaS can be underpinned by object storage or tape.

Keep It Simple and Use a Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS) Provider

DRaaS providers can be an excellent avenue for organizations wanting to "get out of the data center business" and save money in the process. In fact, it is not uncommon for DRaaS prices to be 30% to 50% of what it would otherwise cost to build out similar capabilities. But each situation is different and typically hinges on investments made to date and answers to the above foundational questions around objective, current costs, team priorities and other strategic initiatives.

To start, be aware many publicly available resources muddle the definition of DRaaS. Just look at any DRaaS forecast on the internet and you'll find that nearly all of them contain a potpourri of related yet different providers — from replication tools to appliances to cloud providers to hosting providers with DR capabilities. To be clear, these are all absolutely viable options. But the conflation causes a lot of confusion that is counterproductive when trying to act quickly with few resources.

Disaster recovery as a service is a service in which the provider manages server image and data replication to the cloud, run book creation, automated failover and failback to and from the cloud, and network element configuration during and for recovery operations. To be considered DRaaS versus do-it-yourself recovery, all elements of the service must be included in the service offering contract between the provider and customer and include a standardized SLA for recovery.

DRaaS providers have several advantages to enable savings for customers. They often enjoy pay-as-you-go fee structures from partners, have already invested in talent and compliance, have economies of scale, influence partner roadmaps, focus on automation, and benefit by leveraging capacity across many customers. On this last point, upon engaging a DRaaS provider, be certain to ask how capacity is managed across the customer base so you can be assured of DR capabilities should a regional event arise. Leverage Gartner analysts to help with downselection and proposal reviews.

DRaaS prices to be 30% to 50% of what it would otherwise cost to build out similar capabilities.

When looking at the overall Infrastructure spend for average organizations, the highest expense is network, followed by compute, database, storage and data center hosting costs.¹

Reduce DR Costs: “There Is a Mandate to Reduce DR Costs”

I&O leaders aim to change the focus from cost-oriented discussions to value-oriented discussions. But there are simply times when cost reduction challenges must be met. When that happens, DR is one of the first areas scrutinized as it is unfortunately deemed by many as a nice-to-have insurance policy.

When this occurs, organizations naturally tend to first focus on the DR data center when looking at DR costs. And when the only purpose of the secondary location is DR, that is logical. However, it is important for the team to understand the cost structure and “follow the money.” When looking at the overall Infrastructure spend for average organizations, the highest expense is network, followed by compute, database, storage and data center hosting costs.¹ Instruct the team to home in on these areas as well as DR-specific cost areas such as backup/replication software and labor. Because to make the biggest savings impact, we need to follow the money.

Reduce Network Costs

Network expenses represent 9% of an average organization’s entire IT spend and 41% of infrastructure and operations expense.² Leverage Gartner best practices for negotiating carrier costs, and minimize bandwidth costs by taking advantage of bursting capabilities during failovers to the disaster recovery site. Savings upward of 70% can be achieved.

Reduce Compute Costs

- **Eliminate:** Assess the landscape to ensure unused systems have truly been decommissioned.
- **Repurpose:** Use preproduction environments as recovery targets.
- **Virtualize more:** The cost to provide disaster recovery for physical x86 servers can be more than six times greater than for virtualized x86 servers.
- **Leverage IT resilience orchestration (ITRO) portability capabilities:** If the team has already procured ITRO tools, rather than use hardware-storage-based replication, take advantage of the fact the target infrastructure does not have to match the exact same expensive hardware that resides in production.

This can open up other options such as on-demand public cloud compute IaaS and the ability to repurpose preproduction environments.

Reduce Replication/Backup Software Costs

- **Revisit IBM Power’s replication approach:** Products such as MIMIX and Assure iTERA are absolutely proven in terms of their capabilities to deliver high availability and disaster recovery capabilities for IBM Power workloads. But they are quite expensive in terms of the solutions themselves, and ongoing management costs alone end up being no less than \$72,000 to \$100,000 per year.

When investigating options, ensure stakeholders understand high availability (HA) is optional, whereas having DR is a requirement. HA is related to disaster recovery (DR), in that HA could save you from needing to declare a disaster. But HA alone will not protect the organization from corrupted data from human error, viruses, or ransomware, as the damage can quickly propagate to the secondary location. If “near zero” data loss is acceptable and the team doesn’t regularly perform role swaps between locations, lower-cost alternatives such as the use of IBM Global Mirror should be investigated.

- **Gamify backup vendor pricing models:**

There are many new pricing models available from backup providers — from functional to all inclusive to subscription models. Merely picking the right model can provide significant savings. Also, many sales teams are now being incentivized to focus on recurring revenue through channel partners versus one-time purchases. The cost delta between the options can be significant. But in order to determine which is the best option for minimizing backup licensing costs, organizations need to understand their infrastructure from a backup perspective — not merely from a front-end capacity perspective.

Reduce Licensing Costs

Take an inventory of software being used and engage your sourcing teams to ensure you are not unnecessarily paying for software costs. Examples can include the use of Azure Hybrid Benefit for SQL Server or recovery techniques related to Oracle Databases to positively impact license implications.

Reduce Storage Costs

- **Revisit retention/number of journal days:** Several replication tools allow for retention periods (or journals) of several weeks from which an earlier point in time can be restored quickly. This can be particularly helpful for recovery situations such as data corruption or ransomware. But just because your team can store a month of restore points, doesn't mean they should. Determine the associated storage costs and whether they are worth it — especially considering if the team is likely already backing the workloads up via other means. And for most ITRO products, it does not necessarily have to be one size fits all. Each virtual machine can be configured differently. In the unlikely event there aren't other copies, see if your DRaaS replication tool has built-in functionality to offload older copies to lower cost storage.
- **Autotier older backups:** Autotiering of older backups can lower cost storage, as described in the Frugally Fix DR section.

Reduce the Number of Full-Blown Exercises

Perform more DR exercises but across less of the estate; or move to a more event-based approach. For example, if you're in a steady state where there have been no significant changes, you can relax testing. Testing is more critical after you make major changes that impact DR, but you only really need to test the areas impacted by the changes.

Optimize: "Improve Investment Profile to Improve DR Value Proposition" Automate, Automate, Automate

Disaster recovery exercises can be quite laborious and expensive. Purpose-built ITRO tools, add-on capabilities brought forth by IT service management (ITSM) or cloud management platform (CMP) tools, or in-house built tools using popular automation tools can be used to automate recovery, and, thus, lower costs while also building confidence.

Piggyback Off of Other Strategic Initiatives

These are all "tail wagging the dog" examples where the likelihood of obtaining investment is low if merely viewed through a traditional DR lens. But when such initiatives are in play, these serve as ripe opportunities to piggyback recovery-oriented investments and avoid the burden of needing to absorb all costs. Examples of investments include:

- **Resiliency initiatives:** Cyber resiliency and business continuity initiatives offer many opportunities to piggyback recovery improvements. An example relevant for the recovery component of such programs is the best approach to safely bringing back the affected applications, systems and data amid a cyber attack, which may not be obvious immediately. You may have to try a few approaches until you find the one that will safely and quickly return your enterprise to a normal operating environment. Your backups might also be infected. If so, then a traditional cutover to the IT disaster recovery environment might be wrong, because the cyber attacker will be right there in the recovery environment as soon as you switch operations to your alternative data center facility. This requires investment to mature capabilities, and security threats are top of mind for most boards of directors.
- **Minimum footprint burden avoidance:** The number of options for DR today is tremendous. But commercially, some of those options are better if there is already another initiative with which to piggyback. One such example is VMware Cloud for AWS, a platform that can be used for DR. But minimum commitment costs (e.g., three-node minimum) wreck most DR-only business cases.

However, when there are other initiatives already in play that absorb those costs, fiscal viability of the business case for DR drastically improves. Then tools such as VMware Site Recovery and Veeam Cloud Tier can be used to replicate the data and then spin up additional on-demand hosts for disaster recovery — thus, DR only absorbs compute charges when needed for exercises or DR events.

Building on that example, there can also be positive snowball effects. The workloads subsuming the initial three hosts might also leverage products such as NetApp Cloud Volumes ONTAP or services like those from Faction to avoid overprovisioning compute — something that can happen with storage-heavy workloads on hyperconverged platforms. In the event the piggybacked initiatives plan to use tools like these, you may be able to fiscally benefit even greater from a DR investment standpoint.

- **Hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI):** It is highly unlikely you will move to hyperconverged infrastructure solely for DR

The cost to provide disaster recovery for physical x86 servers can be more than six times greater than for virtualized x86 servers.

Leverage digital workplace infrastructure to keep people productive at home without the need for a recovery office — which itself may have limited access during mobility restrictions (e.g., a pandemic, civil unrest, weather).

reasons. But, if your production environments are moving more toward hyperconverged, additional piggyback options will be made available. For example, beyond VMware HCI, Datrium has multiple options (including recovery to VMware Cloud without HCI) and Nutanix offers Xi Leap for DR.

- **Network agility and efficiency:** Digital business requires agile networks, but 70% of enterprise networking activities are performed manually. This creates “human middleware” that limits networking scalability and agility, and increases the likelihood of errors. Emerging “cool” network vendors enable increasing amounts of network automation and demonstrate new and innovative approaches to address long-standing challenges.
- **SaaS:** Often SaaS migrations involve workloads that had previously required a more expensive DR solution. Upon moving to SaaS, the ability (and thus the cost) of providing DR yourself is eliminated. But this doesn’t negate the responsibility to validate the SaaS provider’s capabilities and follow through with agreed risk mitigation requirements (e.g., backups).
- **Cloud data management or copy data management — related initiatives:** These may not be initiatives initially led by DR teams or storage teams at all. Rather, they can be teams focused on discovery and compliance initiatives, application development teams, or those reporting to the chief data officer. Piggyback opportunities exist here as well because there are a growing number of products that have not only restoration capabilities but many other multifaceted benefits. For example, Cohesity supports MapReduce, Splunk for analytics, and compliance mapping capabilities. Rubrik provides recovery for NoSQL and has options like Polaris Radar (ransomware detection and automated remediation). Those are just a couple examples. The point is these products also provide recovery capabilities as well, and the DR team doesn’t need to go at it alone when it comes to investing. Reach out to other teams to understand parallel initiatives and align those needs with vendors in “Critical Capabilities for Data Center Backup and Recovery Solutions” to identify potential piggyback opportunities.

Partner With End-User Support Teams

Historically for most organizations, recovery for desktops and endpoint devices has fallen under business continuity, but has been out of scope for IT disaster recovery. But Gartner expects this to evolve given the criticality of the digital workplace. In fact, we have already seen some DRaaS providers begin to add these capabilities into their offerings and some could be piggyback options (e.g., the use of hyperconverged for virtual desktop infrastructure [VDI]). Some examples to optimize digital workplace costs include:

- Deploy internet-accessible remote control technology to enable remote-first support and reduce support costs during DR.
- Ensure endpoint management operates outside any VPN connectivity, ideally transforming to a unified endpoint management (UEM) solution for PCs, smartphones and tablets.
- Enable analytics on endpoints to improve reliability, reduce incidents and proactively support endpoints in a DR scenario.
- Utilize desktop as a service (DaaS) or expand VDI services to allow mobility without the need to provision endpoints during a DR scenario.
- Leverage digital workplace infrastructure to keep people productive at home without the need for a recovery office — which itself may have limited access during mobility restrictions (e.g., a pandemic, civil unrest, weather).
- Optimize device life cycle services with low-touch and no-touch operations for device refresh, break/fix or employee onboarding and exits.

Bottom Line

Ensure there is alignment as to the definition of costs and scope. For cost reduction initiatives, follow the money then partner and piggyback off of other strategic initiatives in order to achieve a state of optimization.

Evidence

¹ “Survey Analysis: IT Disaster Recovery Trends and Benchmarks”

² “IT Key Metrics Data 2020: Infrastructure Measures — Executive Summary”

Security Strategies in Evaluating Data Center Services

- Meet with the MSP and go over each relevant item thoroughly. In other words, challenge the MSP and require them to provide written proof that they can perform as expected.
- Request a client list and using the list, randomly contact clients with similar requirements as your own. Ask questions accordingly.
- Review MSP provided certifications, e.g. SOC 1, SOC2 Type 2 (SSAE 18), PCI-DSS, CJIS, IRS Publication 1075, etc. Use them as a reference versus your Risk Assessment documents. If gaps, find out why and seek additional information.
- The MSP should be current and continually updated with new and changing technologies, hardware/ software/network functionality, etc. that may affect your organization.
- Ensure MSP's approach and implementation strategies are consistent with that of your organization and are clearly outlined within any contract.
- Address compliance and certification
- Ensure you are a "partner" with the MSP on security
- The strength of the MSP's technical and security skills
- The strength of their relationships with their vendors
- Are you planning an accelerated migration to a Managed Services Provider or for using Cloud services? If yes, will the MSP be prepared to provide the necessary support, especially as it pertains to security?

Call us today to learn more about our:

- **Data Center Risk Assessment Security Strategies and Checklists**
- **Disaster Recovery Checklist**

Source: Blue Hill

"Request a client list and randomly contact clients with similar requirements as your own."

County Government Recognizes the Strength of the Blue Hill Team During COVID-19

Introduction:

During this COVID-19 pandemic, many customers now require additional resources and support. This is such an example, where enhancements were required to be implemented very quickly and efficiently, in order to support this new capability for Court cases to be filed electronically rather than in person.

We were therefore pleased to receive this note of praise, because it emphasizes the impact of a highly qualified true team effort working together

under emergency time constraints to accomplish a critical business objective.

We appreciate our customer taking the time and making the effort to compliment the work of an accomplished team member from Blue Hill who played a key role within the team of essential IT staff members within this County Government. Receiving this recognition strengthens the team's purpose and makes us a stronger team working together.

"The team rose to the challenge and implemented a quality product in the timeframe needed."

Internal Customer Announcement:

"Congratulations to the Courts Team for the successful implementation of the efilng system enhancement to allow Domestic and Criminal Case Types to be filed electronically. This request arose as a result of the COVID-19 shutdown for Circuit Court and had a very challenging deadline. The team rose to the challenge and implemented a quality product in the timeframe needed."

"Kudos to the team for their hard work and dedication in making this happen! This was truly a team effort!"

Source: Blue Hill

Work-From-Home (WFH) Program Selected 18 Months Before the COVID-19 Pandemic Began

Introduction

More than a year before the COVID-19 Pandemic forced many workers to WFH, this leading management consulting company in Connecticut for certain business reasons, decided to implement a WFH directive in order to streamline costs. Now that the COVID-19 virus has forced almost all organizations to temporarily close their offices and fully operate in the midst of social distancing, this may now become the 'new normal' for many organizations.

Initially, in examining ways to be more efficient, their Management recognized most of its consultants were working routinely at client sites many days during each week. The cost of maintaining a central office that was not used much of the time was significant. Furthermore, their expensive office space did not have room for expansion, specifically to accommodate new associates joining the firm! Moving to a bigger office would be very expensive and require a lot of effort. This, along with the rapid growth of the firm, required a long-term solution, and after exhausting many alternatives, they ultimately decided to adopt a WFH model. This would provide the flexibility they needed to adapt to their developing customer facing requirements, and it would be more cost effective.

From a technology standpoint, relocating employees to work from their homes was straightforward. These management consultants already had laptops and mobile phones to support their field work, so they had the tools needed for a home office. However, there was one significant challenge to be resolved.

Management struggled with where to locate the company's servers. Though many of the firm's workloads had been moved to the Cloud for applications like Office 365, the firm still had several servers that were required to deliver important proprietary financial and database applications. The management of the firm was not comfortable placing these critical workloads

in the Public Cloud because of their stringent security requirements. They also believed the cost of moving some of their larger database applications to the Public Cloud would be much more expensive.

An alternative was to move the servers to the home of one of the senior partners, but this option did not have an environment with the required enterprise quality power, air conditioning, and the necessary security measures. They also required accessibility at any time of the day or night.

They realized they needed to find a colocation partner that could provide:

- Environmental systems to assure proper temperature and humidity at all times
- A redundant Power Supply backed up by redundant Air Conditioning, UPS, and Generator systems
- A purpose-built facility with 24/7/365 secure access and continuous video monitoring
- Remote Hands services to assist with tasks like rebooting servers when necessary
- A colocation partner with the flexibility to provide a tailored service including a facility for occasional meetings of some the firms' employees

The firm considered a number of colocation service providers and selected Blue Hill/CAPS for the following reasons:

- A stellar record of over 20 years without service disruptions caused by unscheduled power outages
- SSAE 18 (SOC 1 Type 2) secure data center with 24/7/365 access
- Cost effective colocation solution

"This customer realized savings of approximately 50% of the cost of its former operation."

- Tailored solution including Remote Hands services and use of meeting rooms as needed
- Assistance procuring an IP based telephone system

In the time since the decision was made to partner with Blue Hill/CAPS, this consulting firm has realized the following benefits:

- Savings of approximately 50% of the cost of its former operation
- Improved flexibility and ability to add staff as needed

- More secure servers with more resiliency, better power, internet capabilities, and environmental controls
- Many of the recurrent IT infrastructure support tasks are now handled seamlessly
- An upgraded telephone system saved the firm money and improved functionality

As many organizations employ WFH on a much bigger scale in response to COVID-19, planning ahead and especially contingency planning can have very tangible business benefits in working through this time of great change.

Source: Blue Hill

Transitioning In: 3 New Customers and Why They Selected Blue Hill, Serving a State Government, Higher Education and State Retirement Fund

State Government

Introduction:

This large State Government is located in the southeast part of the United States.

Customer Objectives:

Their RFP contained the following objectives:

- Meet State business needs for highly available, reliable, scalable, and secure Services
 - Conform to State policy, industry standards and government regulations (e.g., security and data protection)
 - Deliver services with availability guarantees backed by Service-Level Requirements (SLRs)
 - Deliver services that can leverage operational scale and best practices to achieve optimum commercial price performance
 - Deliver ongoing feedback mechanisms to ensure performance meets expectations
 - Eliminate duplicated services within State Government
 - Achieve cost reductions in the supply of services to client agencies
- Eliminate the CAPEX expense of future mainframe hardware and associated peripheral equipment
 - Deliver dependable, cost effective services for ongoing mainframe support as the State's mainframe infrastructure is approaching end-of-life
 - Reduce current mainframe support expenses by utilizing Blue Hill's leveraged resource model (hardware, software, staff)
 - Ensure that you will not be "nickel-and-dimed" throughout the term of the contract, so that you can be assured that there will be no surprises with the pricing, nor will there be any unanticipated charges
 - Rebadge certain key employees
 - Scalability in receiving decreased pricing (decremental pricing) as mainframe utilization is reduced
 - Decrease Third Party software costs over time as utilization decreases
 - Maintain a high availability and secure environment
 - Extend the capabilities of your IT department with excellent 24/7/365 mainframe operations support
 - Receive continuous communication with a dedicated Relationship Manager to ensure performance meets or exceeds current SLAs
 - Receive equal-to-or-better-than Service Levels.

Why Blue Hill Data Services was selected:

- Leverage existing DRaaS solution for the State to now include Mainframe DR, to take advantage of inter-dependencies between the State's DR server and mainframe environments, seamlessly.
- Eliminate duplicate services that may exist within the States IT environment

"Blue Hill to deliver dependable cost-effective services for ongoing mainframe support as the State's mainframe infrastructure is approaching end-of-life."

“An elastic utilization/billing model was provided, with the ability to expand and contract as requirements increase and decrease.”

State University Introduction:

This State University has over 70,000 students and stands among America’s highest-ranked public research universities, and is known as an academic, health, and research powerhouse.

Customer Objectives:

Their RFP contained the following objectives:

- Outsource existing mainframe hardware and support to a qualified managed hosting provider
- Realize cost savings as Enterprise Infrastructure (EI) re-architects its computing infrastructure
- Reduce or eliminate vulnerability due to staff retirements
- Maintain a current and supported hardware and software environment for audit and compliance purposes
- Improve Operations coverage and expand to 24/7/365
- Improve IMS DBA support
- Achieve greater flexibility by adjusting hardware capacity as workload demands increase/decrease over time
- Enable additional flexibility in other areas of the infrastructure, particularly storage and Disaster Recovery

Why Blue Hill Data Services was selected:

- Fully managed 24/365 support solution that will reduce operating expenses and eliminate future capital expenses
- Improve Disaster Recovery RTO utilizing replication to a Blue Hill DR site
- Experienced, capable IMS DBA support services
- A commitment to support all versions of software, no upgrades to current levels required
- Elastic utilization/billing model with the ability to expand and contract as requirements increase and decrease (during peak periods)

- Manage and maintain all IBM and Third-Party software agreements

State Education Employee Retirement System Introduction:

This service-oriented public pension system provides retirement, healthcare, and related benefit programs for public education employees, retirees, and their beneficiaries, within this large South Western State, serving more than 1.5 million enrollees.

Their “best in class” investment management and delivery of pension and health care benefits has been recognized and honored by many reputable institutions.

Customer Objectives:

Their RFP contained the following objectives:

- Obtain the Services that represent the best value for this organization and for their State
- Be fully migrated to an MSP within 3 months to meet deadlines when equipment would no longer be maintained
- Turnkey Project Management, Planning and Migration services to ensure minimal downtime of the existing legacy application and services
- Eliminate the need and capital expense of purchasing a new processor to stay on current operating software releases
- Realize a cost-effective solution while making plans to transition off the mainframe platform within 3-5 years

Why Blue Hill Data Services was selected:

- Partner with an experienced IT team to receive services at cost-effective pricing.
- Provide a dedicated CPU to mitigate the potential risk often posed by Third Party Software vendors when customers want to transition to an outsourced model
- Provide a Dedicated DR environment, reducing the RTO from 72 hours to 24 hours, with guaranteed availability and unlimited test time

- Improve responsiveness by transitioning from physical tape to Virtual Tape
- As their employees retire, provide additional support services as needed
- Help support their plans to transition off the Mainframe over time

“Blue Hill Data Services came highly recommended, and I liked their approach and knowledge, and that every one of their customers could be a reference. That shows a strong commitment to providing the partnership we were looking for.”

....CIO, State Education Employee Retirement System

Source: Blue Hill

“Blue Hill is only one of two vendors I will provide a reference for.”

Why Clients Select Blue Hill

- Specialization in Mainframe Legacy Support
 - Mainframe-as-a-Service – Data Center Hosting – Fully Managed Services
- Mitigate the risk of a retiring workforce, who run business critical operations
- Reduce costs – leverage HW/SW/Svc’s
- “Pay for what you Use” price model
- Replace CapEx with OpEx
- Support “as is” – not force clients to upgrade or change the way they are used to operating
- Newer Technologies/Continuous Improvement Processes
- Better Service Levels - Faster Processing/ Virtualized environments

OUR DIFFERENTIATORS

Flexibility

- Do not force clients to upgrade software OS levels; run “as is”; positive affect on hardware and other software; upgrade at client request, not forced by provider
- Clients select support services as requested
- Contract flexibility – responds to customer term length requirements, options for renewals

Clear Cost Benefits

- Lean and agile, not bloated executive level
- Cost-effective pricing models, price competitive
- Easy to understand Total Cost of Ownership (TCO)
- Eliminate CapEx, Reduce OpEx

Scalable Solutions

- Scalable architecture, responsiveness to demanding business changes
- Superior, predicable and secure solutions
- Pay as you Go model; flexibility to scale up or down as requirements change

“I deal with hundreds of vendors, and Blue Hill is only one of two vendors I will provide a reference for. They have been a great partner, from initial evaluation through migration to ongoing daily support. This team has never let us down and they provide great value.”

“Like our initial migration and stable operations, Disaster Recovery testing is another area where Blue Hill excels. We have experienced extremely smooth DR testing - it’s easy, fast, and there haven’t been any issues.”

“We received bids from multiple vendors, and Blue Hill was very competitive in the market. But given the ongoing excellent service we have experienced, I now realize their value is even greater than I first estimated.”

...CIO, Manufacturing and Distribution Company

Operational Excellence

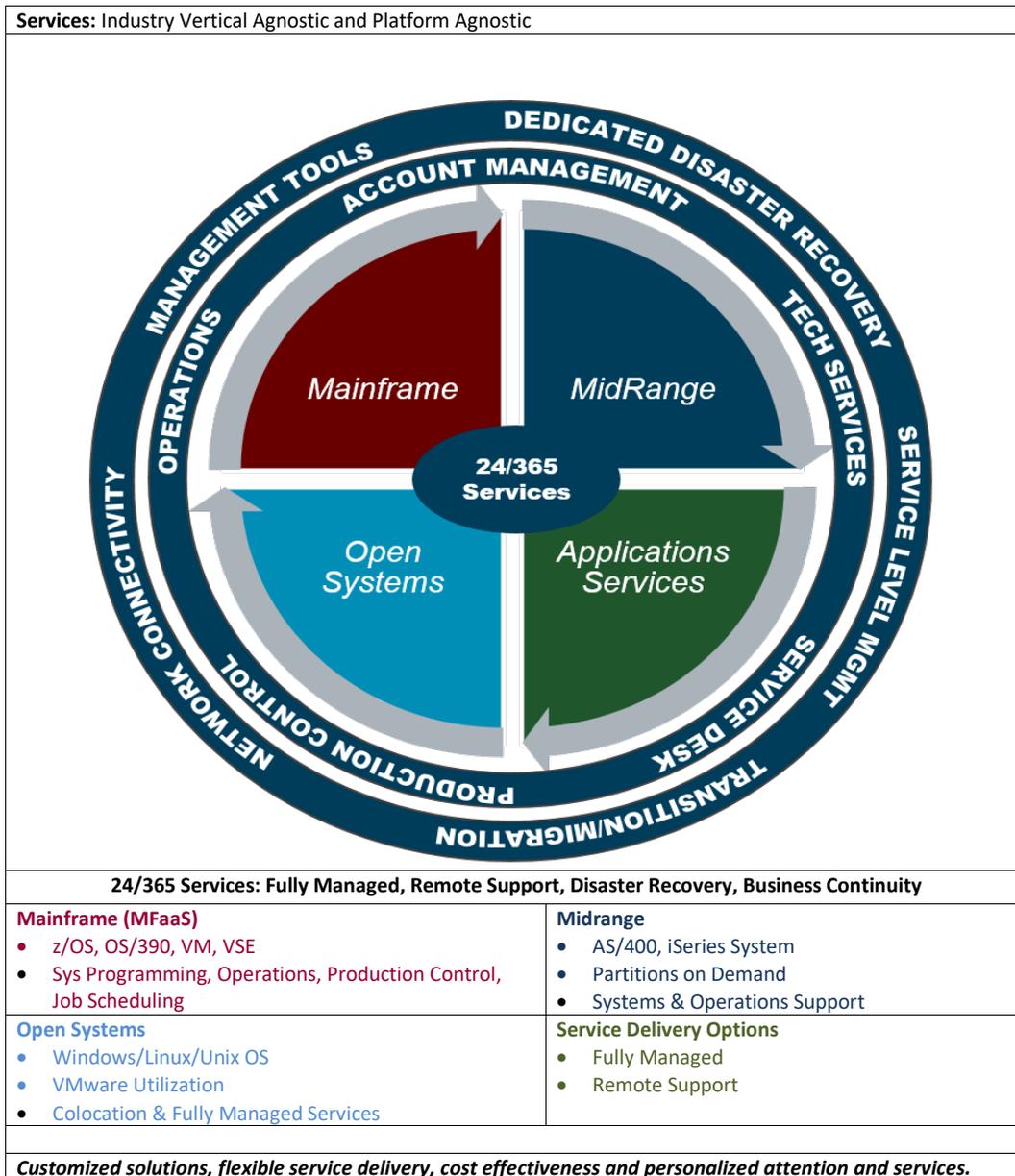
- 30 years’ experience managing complex client environments
- Improved service delivery; meet or exceed existing SLAs
- Dedicated Account Management for 100% Client Satisfaction

Core Business

- Blue Hill is focused on ITO as a core business
- Client advocacy
- “Client-first” is critical to our success

Blue Hill Managed Services Offerings

Figure 1. BLUE HILL MANAGED SERVICES OFFERINGS



Source: Blue Hill

"I just wanted to say, you have an awesome team of people at Blue Hill."

"You are taking great care of us!"

“Your people handled the issue we faced last night awesomely. Appreciate it!”

“Really think a lot of your team and wanted to say thank you!”

Our Value

Why Customers Select Us

- Mitigate risk of retiring workforce – who run business critical operations
- Reduce costs – leverage HW/SW/Svc’s
- “Pay for what you Use” price model
- Replace CapEx with OpEx
- Support “as-is” – not force clients to upgrade or change the way they are used to operating
- Better Service Levels – Faster Processing/Virtualized environments

Blue Hill Data Services: Cost-Effective, Flexible, Secure, On-Shore Data Center Hosting Solutions

Blue Hill Data Services helps clients **reduce their operating costs** and **minimize risk** by providing **fully managed data center hosting solutions**, and a full array of complementary IT support services. Our highly skilled and experienced staff, **world-class On-Shore USA facilities**, and reliable 24/365 services have supported clients worldwide and from all industries since 1994. We specialize in **flexible, private cloud solutions** to support **Mainframe, Open/Distributed Systems**, and **AS/400 iSeries** managed hosting and **Remote Support** services; **Applications** Services; **Colocation** Services; **Dedicated Disaster Recovery** and **Business Continuity Solutions**. Our deep technical skills and long-standing experience enable us to support our clients’ legacy environments as well as implement new technology solutions. Our differentiation is **providing customized solutions, flexibility with contracts and SLAs, and personalized attention and services**.

All services are delivered On-Shore USA.

We are proud our client retention is 100%.



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