Survey Reveals Lack Of Understanding By Business Executives

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Of The Value Of Disaster Recovery And Business Continuity To Organizational Success

Research Delivers Call to Action for IT Executives to Educate and Closely Involve Business Decision-Makers in Disaster Recovery Planning

There is a significant disconnect between information technology (IT) and business executives when it comes to disaster recovery preparedness, according to the results of a new State of Disaster Recovery survey.

While both sets of executives share same views on the importance of information availability to the business, survey data reveal a split in how to achieve the goal of minimizing downtime when an unplanned IT outage occurs.

In the survey commissioned by SunGard Availability Services and conducted by Harris InteractiveÂ®, both IT and business decision-makers say information availability is important to the success of their business (83 percent of IT, 78 percent of business).

However, fewer than half of business executives say disaster recovery and business continuity are important to business success compared with a large majority of IT executives (74 percent of IT, 49 percent of business).

"The survey shows IT and business decision-makers really want the same things â€“ to avoid lost productivity and negative impact on customer satisfaction that can result from unplanned outages," said Patrick Doherty, executive vice president and chief marketing officer at SunGard Availability Services.

"But there is a meaningful gap between these groups on how to achieve that goal. It is largely because the business is not connecting the requirement to keep core IT systems and applications available with overall company success. IT systems are still viewed as a 'black boxâ€˜ to many business executives, especially when it comes to the dependency between systems that impact overall availability."

Disconnect Manifested in Disaster Recovery Funding
The lack of business understanding about the value of disaster recovery is clearly exhibited in executive views on funding levels.

IT decision-makers were significantly more likely to say insufficient funding is among the biggest obstacles they face in developing an effective disaster recovery plan for their companies (42 percent of IT to 32 percent of business).

IT executives were also more likely to say they have inadequate resources (25 percent of IT to 11 percent of business) to make disaster recovery plans effective â€“ and believe investing in disaster recovery and business continuity are more important in the current economy because their companies canâ€˜t afford the risk of any unexpected downtime (33 percent of IT to 18 percent of business).

The gap in support for funding disaster preparedness may be the result of business decision-makers being less knowledgeable about their companyâ€˜s disaster recovery plans.

For example, business executives were significantly more likely to say they are unsure as to how frequently their firmâ€˜s disaster recovery plans are tested (30 percent compared to 5 percent of IT) or what their plan includes (41 percent compared to 4 percent of IT).

"An essential step in any effective disaster recovery/business continuity plan is involving the business functions in plan development, testing and execution. Disasters can impact operational and financial performance, regulatory compliance, and relations with customers and partners. Information availability should be viewed as preventative care. Just as you exercise to stay healthy and in shape to avoid going to the emergency room, taking measures to help ensure that people and information are always connected keeps the lifeblood of the organization pumping productively. The survey results are a call to action to IT executives on the need to educate business decision-makers on whatâ€˜s involved in your companyâ€˜s disaster recovery plans,"said Mr. Doherty.

Overcoming Road Blocks to Effective Disaster Recovery Systems
Despite insufficient funding being the biggest challenge companies face in developing an effective recovery plan, just one-fifth of respondents (17 percent of IT, 19 percent of business) say their company currently uses a third-party provider to manage disaster recovery systems.

But more than half of the survey respondents that use a third-party disaster recovery offering believe those offerings are more cost effective and provide better solutions.

"The survey data show third-party service providers are well-positioned to help companies overcome obstacles related to addressing unplanned outages and recovering from disasters in an affordable way. This can relieve some of the stress on IT operations by helping them to focus internal resources on systems and applications that are core to the business. It also helps them avoid the significant capital expenditures required to handle disaster recovery in house," said Mr. Doherty.

Downtime Pressures on IT
Contributing to the stress on IT operations is the pressure to keep unplanned IT downtime at low levels. About two-thirds (66 percent) of IT executives say the amount of downtime tolerated has grown shorter over the last two years.

About 50 percent (54 percent) of IT decision-makers report their organizations can tolerate downtime of only five hours or less.

When asked to give their company a letter grade on their companyâ€˜s ability to access business-critical information after an unplanned outage, 30 percent of IT executives chose a ?C? or ?D? â€“ which compares to only 22 percent selecting those grades in the survey done in 2007.

"The demands to reduce downtime in an environment where there are not enough resources are driving IT executives to grade themselves tougher than two years ago. The reality is IT lives in a pass/fail world when it comes to disaster preparedness. This makes it imperative for IT and business to share responsibility in helping ensure systems, information and people stay connected," said Mr. Doherty.

Methodology
This survey was conducted online within the United States by Harris Interactive on behalf of SunGard Availability Services in March 2009 with 497 qualified respondents, including 277 business and 220 IT participants.

Qualified business respondents hold at least a director level title and have associated responsibilities, such as business and staff, in business areas. Qualified IT respondents hold at least a manager level title and have associated responsibilities, such as business and staff, in IT areas.

All respondents came from companies with 50 or more employees.

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