Case Study: One Company’s Journey to a Modern Disaster Recovery Solution- DRaaS

Craig Rhodes - Structured Communication Systems, Inc.
Agenda

• Introduction
• Who should attend this presentation
• Project Background
• Process/Timeline
• Lessons Learned
• Update: Where we are today
Who should attend this Presentation?

- Those with traditional DR (Disaster Recovery) interested in learning about DRaaS (Disaster Recovery as a Service)
- Those without a DR program or who don’t have adequate DR
- Those not satisfied with their current DR
- Those considering DRaaS as a gateway to utilizing the cloud
- Those interested in more information or best practices
- Those who utilize DRaaS and are just curious
About the Speaker

- Craig Rhodes
  - Managing Director, Data Center Services at Structured
  - Data Center and Program Management Consultant
  - Member, BICSI, AFCOM, ASIS, Infrastructure Masons, PMI
  - BS in Finance, MS in Organization Development
  - Email: crhodes@structured.com
  - LinkedIn: www.linkedin.com/in/craighodhes/
Project Background

• Health care company recently completed data center migration to a co-lo data center facility, utilizing former on-premises production data center for Disaster Recovery
• Just months later, there was a leadership decision to undertake a five-year, multi-million-dollar campus overhaul
• The DR data center was consuming “premium office space” – and became a prime candidate to relocate
• Considered co-lo, DRaaS, began in early 2018
In our case, it was approximately 10 months from Assessment start to Contract signing. Onboarding is a 6-12-month process depending on size and complexity.
Assessment and Feasibility

• Assessment of DRaaS and feasibility for use
• Considered co-lo space to understand costs, services, etc.
• Inventory first
  – Number of servers (physical vs. virtual), data volumes, hardware platform dependencies, latency considerations
• Documented requirements to support RFI process
  – Cybersecurity, performance, bandwidth, application access
Inventory/Tiering

• Recommend detailed server and application inventory

• Key to have DR tiering (Tier 1, 2, 3, 4, etc.)
  – Informs SLA conversation and data protection strategy
  – Determines server type: always-on, warm, cold standby

• VERY helpful to know current DR costs
  – Include allocations for internal labor, testing, equipment, rent, depreciation, circuits, etc.

• Allows for comparison of IaaS, Co-lo, Cloud, or DRaaS
RFI/RFP/Vendor Selection

- Create RFI document to facilitate evaluation
- Develop selection criteria to score and rank vendors
- Develop realistic schedule for the RFP process
- Allow time to score, review, conduct bidder's conference
  - If results are not what you’d expect, don’t be afraid to course correct - ensure security is not an afterthought!
RFI/RFP/Vendor Selection (continued)

- Do not underestimate the importance of due diligence
- Visit vendor facilities, utilize a scoring model
- Are vendors flexible or inflexible?
- How important is your business to them?
- Are vendors current with the times, or behind?
- What is the vendor relationship with the data center operator?
Contracting

• Have regular meeting cadence for contract/negotiation process
• Document agreement on key points
• Contract considerations
  – Build in mechanisms for growth and expansion (or reduction)
  – Minimize any custom hardware that requires hosting
  – Make the contract SLA (service level agreement) driven
Onboarding

• Pre-Onboarding
  – Tech session prior to start of onboarding in January.
  – Hold team events to build strong cross-team bond.

• Onboarding
  – Hold a kickoff meeting, review project plan, set realistic schedule.
  – Understand data volumes and equipment lead/build times.
  – Document team commitments and maintain team consistency.
  – Manage risks and address issues in a written log.
Implementation

• With service provider, built out data center over a 6-month period
• Replicated 50+ applications, 450 servers, 500Tb data
• Data replication and process work were key drivers
• Partnership, process, scope management were keys to success
Lessons Learned

• Create opportunities to bring vendor and tech teams together
• Order circuits during contracting phase- (cancel later if needed)
• Recommend dual circuits to expedite replication
• Treat vendor with respect; consider them an extension of your team
• Organizational change- address concerns around outsourcing
• Cultivate executive involvement and buy-in along the way
Other Key Considerations

- Build a strong Partnership
- Ensure vendor is financially strong, do reference calls
- Consider vendors from Gartner/Forrester as a starting point
- Consider utilizing external assistance from independent consulting firm to help manage the process (PM, Architecture)
- Include Cybersecurity at the beginning
- Decisions around scope are difficult but critically important
Update: Where we are today

- Continual work on inter-company processes
- Decommissioning legacy DR environment
- Continue to maintain strong partnership with vendor
Questions – Please contact Craig Rhodes at crhodes@structured.com