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Enterprise

DISASTER RECOVERY SOLVED COST-EFFECTIVELY

Audio Acoustics implements subscription-based service to protect against risk

It's been in business for 50 years—a testament to the care Audio Acoustics takes in identifying market opportunities, serving its customers, and carefully managing risk. But when it was time to reevaluate its disaster recovery (DR) strategy, this small business needed a solution that would protect its infrastructure without breaking its budget.

Audio Acoustics, a company of around 70 employees based in Springfield, Missouri, has been in business for 50 years. And while it originally focused on installing sound systems, over time, Audio Acoustics has grown by discovering and capitalizing on a range of new niches and opportunities. “We’re a small firm,” explains Bob Graham, IT manager, Audio Acoustics, “and because we’re small, we can be very nimble and adaptable. That’s a big reason we’ve been around as long as we have.”

Another reason for Audio Acoustics’ long-term success is its IT infrastructure: it is robust and reliable enough to support the company’s day-to-day operations, flexible enough to handle growth, and architected to minimize the company’s exposure to risk.

Small businesses face unique trade-offs

All companies must consider and address risk, including the risks posed by everything from economic downturns to server outages and natural disasters. As Audio Acoustic’s IT manager, Graham must also consider the fiscal impact of purchasing technology to minimize risk. “When I make decisions about where to invest in IT, I have to think carefully about the implications,” Graham says. “I have to consider how my spending could impact the company’s overall financial health.”



INDUSTRY: SOUND AND COMMUNICATIONS SERVICES

REGION: UNITED STATES

VISION

Prepare the business for growth and new market opportunities—as well as uncertainties and unknowns

STRATEGY

Protect operations and capital by leveraging cloud-based DR solution

OUTCOMES

- Avoids 100x overspending on business recovery services
- Reduces risk of catastrophic business disruption to near zero
- Enables cost-effective DR environment

Graham therefore looks for cost-effective ways to ensure his company has the resilience it needs to avoid unnecessary business disruption. This includes virtualization. When the COVID-19 pandemic struck, for example, Audio Acoustics was able to pivot quickly, rolling out the virtual workstations it needed for employees to work remotely. “Because we run a virtualized environment, it was easy for us to flip our entire business office so that people could work from home,” Graham says. “We used existing laptops, set up a virtual private network, and within a couple of days, we had made the switch.” This minimized the impact of the pandemic on the company’s ability to do business.

But for a long time, one issue still weighed on Graham’s mind: DR. He knew that a stroke of bad luck—a fire, a tornado—could wipe out Audio Acoustics’ on-site IT systems in a matter of hours or even minutes. And he also knew that should it ever happen, the consequences to the business could be catastrophic. The company would not be able to operate or serve its customers and might even go out of business for good.

For years, Audio Acoustics addressed this risk in a low-tech way. Once a day, Graham or someone on his team would back up the company’s applications and data to a USB drive. Every evening, someone on the team would be responsible for taking the drive home. This practice ensured there was always a current copy of the environment, and that it would be spared if anything damaged or destroyed Audio Acoustics’ on-site servers and storage.



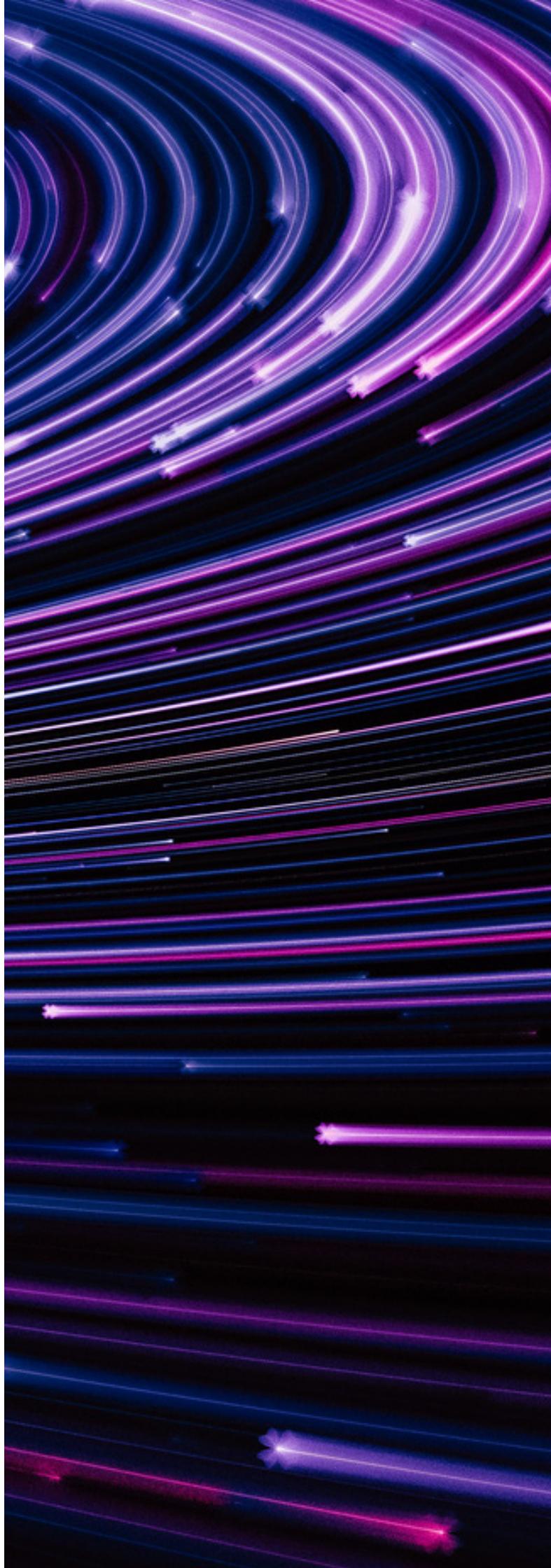
Small businesses need DR as much as large businesses do. But some of the failover DR services we looked at are really expensive. They’re priced for big companies, not companies our size.”

– **BOB GRAHAM**, IT MANAGER, AUDIO ACOUSTICS

Tackling DR

Graham knew this approach wasn’t ideal. It was labor intensive and vulnerable to human error.

But when he began evaluating ways to replicate the company’s environment to an off-site cloud, the costs of many DR services were way out of line for a business of Audio Acoustics’ size. “The cloud services were geared toward big businesses, not a company like ours,” explains Graham. “The services were priced at thousands of dollars a year per server for the backup service itself, and in some



cases, we'd have to buy backup software as well. Those kinds of numbers just aren't a fit for smaller companies."

Finding the right DR fit

The breakthrough came when Graham learned about HPE Cloud Volumes—an on-demand enterprise cloud storage delivering block and backup services solution that lets companies replicate to the cloud directly from an HPE Nimble Storage array. He knew then that he'd found a right-sized solution for his company—at a cost of up to 100 times less than other DR services he'd priced. "We already owned an HPE Nimble array," Graham says. "With the HPE solution, our only additional cost is for the cloud subscription, and that's economical because it's based on the amount of data we want to store."

To meet his criteria for cost-efficiency, Graham decided to use the solution to create off-site copies of business-critical systems only, like the company's enterprise resource planning system. The replication, which runs at night, generally takes only a couple of hours, and has no discernable impact on the performance of the company's network.

Graham has tested the backup multiple times, validating that both the replication and the restore work flawlessly. "It's very simple and easy," he says. "It's not something you have to monitor every day. Once it's set up, it runs itself."

With the new replication solution in place, Graham knows Audio Acoustics could be restored if any of its on-site hardware or software was damaged or corrupted, whether by physical damage, technical issue, or malware. Graham always has a copy of the company's critical systems stored securely off-site; it is always current to within 24 hours. Graham could, if needed, restore critical applications and data himself by leveraging the capacity and capabilities of his virtualized environment. The systems could be replicated on-premises or to a third-party hosted cloud provider.

This solution allows Graham to offer better support to Audio Acoustics employees, in the event that someone erases or misplaces a file. "If someone accidentally deletes a blueprint, it is easy for me to restore it," Graham says.

But the real value, perhaps, is the peace of mind of knowing that Audio Acoustics could continue to operate even if it suffered a catastrophic outage—for example, if a natural disaster destroyed the company's main office and on-site equipment.

The sweet sound of success

As businesses consider how to spend their money, they must balance risk against cost. Finding the right balance for Audio Acoustics' DR strategy was, therefore, a significant milestone for the company. "When we invest in our business, we often find that available solutions are geared more for the big guys," Graham says. "What's different about HPE Cloud Volumes is that it's a fit for us functionally, but is also priced to meet a small businesses' needs. I have no doubt that our experience holds lessons for other small businesses, as well."



We need IT. But we can't overspend on IT. If we gobble up too much, the company can't make a profit. So we look for solutions that are both effective and cost-effective—because we need both."

— BOB GRAHAM, IT MANAGER, AUDIO ACOUSTICS





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