

CASE STUDY: Security Service Federal Credit Union Significantly Improves Disaster Recovery Response Time with Solution from Mainline

Security Service Federal Credit Union (SSFCU), with more than \$6.5 billion in assets, has more than 850,000 members and 69 service centers in Texas, Colorado and Utah, making it the eighth-largest credit union in the United States. The federally insured credit union has increased its membership by expanding its charter through acquisitions of and mergers with other credit unions. It is a member of Credit Union Service Centers, which gives it access to 4,000 credit union locations nationwide through shared branching.

SSFCU was founded in 1956 in San Antonio, Texas, to serve the financial needs of the U.S. Air Force Security Service Command, and is now part of Air Force intelligence operations. Growing from a small membership, SSFCU now has Select Employee Groups (SEGs) eligible for SSFCU membership from a wide range of military, government, educational, religious and business organizations, along with several underserved geographic areas. With approximately 1,500 employees to serve them, members are offered full-service banking, including checking accounts, savings accounts, certificates of deposit, IRAs, consumer and commercial loans, mortgages, investments, insurance, and direct deposit.

The Challenge

Jim Stone, Assistant Vice President of Data Center Operations, was facing a disaster recovery (DR) challenge. SSFCU had a recovery services subscription with IBM, hosted in Boulder, Colorado. As SSFCU evolved and expanded, its DR needs also expanded from a mainframe only to a mainframe and distributed environment. Using backup tapes at a hosted facility to recover both environments was making the credit union's recovery time objectives more difficult to meet. Stone initiated the planning for a DR data center at another site in San Antonio on a different power grid. For help, he called Mainline Information Systems™, an IBM Premier Business Partner that had worked on SSFCU's system over the years.

The Solution

The Mainline Account Executive put together a team of experts to assess SSFCU's current system and requirements. When they completed their assessment, they recommended a solution that would mirror the mainframe production environment. This included a backup system for the current production z10™, a second z10 BC with a capacity backup (CBU) feature, two IBM DS8000® disk storage systems and two IBM TS7700 tape storage units, one each for the production site and new DR site.

IBM System z10 Business Class with CBU feature

The z10 BC with the capacity backup feature is designed to support disaster recovery and high availability needs as a dedicated backup system. It combines flexibility and economic alternatives for deploying business continuity options. With the CBU feature, SSFCU realizes significant savings in software costs because the cost for MSUs (workload-based charging) is minimal compared to the MSUs normally billed for a production z10. For DR testing purposes, SSFCU purchased 15 exercises to test capacity and speed to ensure business continuity.

IBM System Storage DS8000

IBM System Storage DS8000 is a high-performance, high-capacity disk storage system designed to support continuous operations. It uses the IBM POWER™ server technology that is integrated with the IBM Virtualization Engine technology. The DS8000 consists of a storage unit and one or two management consoles. The graphical user interface or the command-line interface allows logical partition storage and built-in copy service functions.



THE CHALLENGE

- Unacceptable disaster recovery lag time
- Disaster recovery needs not met

THE SOLUTION

- IBM System z10™ Business Class with Capacity Backup
- IBM System Storage®DS8000®
- IBM Virtualization Engine TS7700
- Mainline Professional Services

THE RESULTS

- Dramatic reduction of disaster recovery time objective
- High-performance, high-capacity disk storage
- High availability and flexibility
- Ease of management
- Lower TCO

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IBM Virtualization Engine TS7700

The IBM TS7700 is designed to optimize tape processing. The implementation of a fully integrated tiered-storage hierarchy of disk and tape takes advantage of the benefits of both technologies to help enhance performance and provide the capacity needed for today's tape processing requirements. It reduces the costs of data protection, including power, maintenance, operations and support staff and supports business continuity through grid connectivity and automated replication.

Mainline Professional Services

Mainline Professional Services provided the design and implementation plan for the DR solution. The plan included the configuration of the hardware, setup of the tape grid and help developing two sets of procedures—one for the DR test exercises and one for an actual disaster. In the DR exercises, the production data mirroring continues without interruption.

The Results

"With SSFCU's previous disaster recovery solution in Boulder, it would have taken 36-48 hours to be up and running in the event of a disaster," said Stone. "With our new DR center, we can have the mainframe environment ready to start accepting requests from touch points within one hour." He continued, "If the cost to the company of a 36-48-hour lag time in a disaster is factored in, bringing our DR solution in-house will actually save us money."

"To have the entire solution work so well and to get results as good as we are getting was a big plus, especially given that the technology was new to us," Stone observed. "Another plus is that it's simple to manage, so we haven't had to add people to support this solution."

"Mainline was definitely the right choice, and we are very pleased with them," he concluded. "They had a great team—the disk and tape storage experts, plus a great account executive—that always kept us informed and gave us useful feedback."

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