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Enhance Business Continuity through appropriate IT infrastructure

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By **Ross Hammond, Managing Director, Emerson Network Power** | Sep 9, 2009

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The success of any organization is tied to its resiliency and adaptability – the ability to protect against threats that disrupt customer service while embracing and benefiting from change as it occurs.

However, today's complex technologies, high density computing, extreme weather conditions, and security threats, are increasing the likelihood of disruptions in the IT environment. A failure or interruption at any point in the network not only impacts the entire operation but can also lead to serious consequences for the business. In response to this, data center professionals need to strategize to anticipate potential network downtime and enhance their business-continuity plans.

Achieving business continuity requires an integrated power, cooling and monitoring infrastructure that protects the availability and integrity of your IT systems. Power and cooling create the foundation for IT resiliency, and ultimately dictate the level of operational resiliency and flexibility that can be achieved in a given organization.

Assess your situation. Review your existing infrastructure systems and the technologies available. A data centre environment assessment examines the capacity and limitations of existing electrical systems and the quality of power provided to the data center. Base on the current data center operations and future plans, the assessment identifies and resolves existing risks. This includes potential power, cooling and design vulnerabilities that could adversely affect the data centre's operational performance, availability and energy efficiency.

Secure your equipment. While large data centers often have strict access policies and procedures, smaller data centers and remote IT locations may not. Secure your network through the use of key or card swipe locks, and video and surveillance infrastructure to record intrusions either intentional or unintentional.

Security prevents unauthorized access and unauthorized adding or changing equipment that can overload

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circuits, creating a power outage to the equipment

Keep your cool. High density servers and other new IT equipment generate as much as ten times the heat as systems manufactured just 10 years ago. While some businesses may have been able to rely on building air conditioning in the past, with sensitive electronics and higher capacities and densities comes the need for precision IT cooling.

Precision cooling solutions can keep the facility up and running 24x365; ensure high availability and can scale up to support growth within the facility, while ensuring longevity and delivering the lowest total cost of ownership.

Power up for growth Using the right power protection is one of the keys to achieving high availability. UPSs installed years ago may not support current IT requirements. It is important to assess the power requirements for all of the IT equipment – which equipment runs the business and which equipment you can't afford to lose.

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For availability needs, a true online double conversion system provides better protection than other types of UPS. It completely protects sensitive electronics from power anomalies and provides a seamless transition to the battery power.

Growth strategies that depend on multiple UPSs or distributed power infrastructure may add more potential points of failure to the IT system. Moreover, diagnosing problems in a distributed system is difficult and can prolong recovery. Using a centralized approach to power protection, meanwhile, enables organizations to achieve higher availability and scalability for future growth at lower cost.

Ensure sufficient run time for graceful shutdowns or for switching to a secondary power source like a generator. When the power goes out, your UPS system is your first line of defense. Unfortunately, battery failure is the number one cause of UPS related downtime. If your UPSs were installed when there were fewer demands on the network or data center and your batteries haven't been maintained consistently, they may not give you the amount of run time you originally required.

To reduce battery failure risks, conduct manual monitoring or remote monitoring and have a battery replacement schedule in place. Some IT departments manually assess UPSs to see if the battery alarm is sounding or the fault indicator light is on. Monitoring UPSs remotely via network communications and monitoring software with a dedicated person to check the logs can help minimize labor costs and if properly reviewed can effectively reduce battery problems.

Add redundancy. Reduce risks to your IT systems by installing infrastructure redundancy. Most IT and network equipment is dual corded. In a rack setup, this allows you to connect the device to dual PDUs, dual UPSs and dual circuits — the ultimate in high availability. Room level UPSs serving multiple racks also can be configured for

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various levels of redundancy. Cooling systems also can benefit from component redundancy to ensure their operation if any one component fails or is taken offline for maintenance.

Proactively monitor your environment. There are hardware and software monitoring tools, available that allow you to have better visibility and control to your IT infrastructure. The power and cooling equipment your IT systems depend on can be monitored and managed over your network. Special features such as alarms automatically trigger specified events such as e-mail alerts or local notifications. Monitoring your power and cooling equipment can ensure proactive capacity planning and preventive maintenance.

In addition, monitoring your network's environmental conditions prevents potentially threatening environmental conditions such as water from coming in the data center; formation of hot spots, corrosion and static, before they threaten your IT systems.

Have a strategy for service. Develop a service strategy as early in the process as possible. Treating service as an afterthought will prevent the system from achieving expected levels of availability. Proper maintenance, monitoring and keeping equipment up-to-date through factory-certified service technicians, will ensure equipment life spans are increased and performance maximized.

Business continuity is one of those IT initiatives that will save money and keep an organization from losing money. And by including IT infrastructure planning as part of your business continuity strategy, you are removing power and thermal barriers that keep you from getting more from your data center – all with critical power, precision cooling and monitoring that extend beyond the ability to recover and prevent disaster.

BIO: Ross Hammond is the Managing Director for Emerson Network Power (Singapore). He is responsible for the Sales functions comprising Channels, Telecom Solutions and Enterprise systems. Ross is also responsible for the critical service function to DataCentre operators and is in-charge of Emerson Network Power's team of 30 dedicated professionals as well as the back-office functions for the company's operations within the Island City.

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