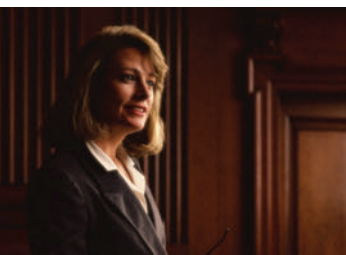




doeLegal



Mission-critical uptime for provider of cloud-based legal collaboration services

Business situation

Hosted services from doeLegal make it simple for corporate legal departments and law firms to move from paper-based or legacy workflows to an advanced cloud-based solution. Instead of spending time and money to build and support their own technology infrastructures, clients subscribe to doeLegal's suite of collaboration services and software including: electronic billing, legal spend, matter management, litigation support, and electronic discovery.

Uptime assurance was a top objective when the Wilmington, Delaware company designed the newest version of doeBilling™, which corporations use to manage their spend on legal services. For years, doeLegal used server hardware clustering to provide clients with highly available around the clock access to e-billing.

“ We found that Avance software gave us the high availability approach we needed in a 24/7 web-based environment. This architecture ensured customers have access to their data in a seamless transition from moment to moment.”

Russ Aaronson
Director of IT
doeLegal

QUICK FACTS

SOLUTION PROFILE

- Cloud-based e-billing, legal spend and matter management solutions for legal departments
- e-Discovery solution suite for legal departments and law firms
- High availability architecture delivering uptime assurance for mission critical applications
- Real-time data replication ensures data integrity and availability

PRODUCTS

- Stratus Avance® high availability software
- Industry-standard x86 servers
- Microsoft® Windows Server® 2008R2 operating system
- Microsoft SQL Server® 2008 R2 database software
- Microsoft SharePoint® Server 2010
- Microsoft Active Directory®

SERVICES

- Avance Software Support Services

Uptime. All the time.



However, high availability protection wasn't seamless to the customer with the legacy approach. The IT team continued to spend considerable time on set up, testing and administration to ensure customers would have minimal impact to production if a failure affected a single server in its cluster of systems.

"We built the rest of our infrastructure to provide high service availability, from our Internet servers through our firewall through our network and server design. We can't have the core database environment unable to react with seamless high availability for customer access. Continuous access to production data is critically important for our customers and our reputation depends on their satisfaction," said Russ Aaronson, Director of IT.

Business objectives

"We were looking for an easier way to have a redundant, high-performing, high availability environment without a single point of failure in the database service," continued Aaronson.

"The legacy capabilities left us with a lot of equipment and software to administer. We were looking for something we could monitor and instantly get alerted on, something that would visually show us when there was a problem and what was happening."

doeLegal had additional requirements that addressed their need for a less complicated way to ensure uptime for e-billing:

- Deliver a seamless, automatic high-availability platform for mission-critical Microsoft technologies
- Ensure customer service levels are met by automatically replicating data in real time
- Increase revenues: cut costs and improve services margins by simplifying administration
- Support growth of the e-billing service

Explained Aaronson, "From a mission-critical perspective, Microsoft SQL Server is core to our e-billing customers' data: what they access, when they access it, the availability, how it's secured, how it's stored."

The Stratus Avance solution

The IT team evaluated and tested possibilities that involved server clusters before learning about Stratus Avance high-availability software. They found Avance software made it easier than a cluster to administer the uptime-protecting capabilities they need. Just as important, there was a good fit with doeLegal's suite of Microsoft technologies.

"It was essential to us that Avance would work with SQL Server and our Microsoft infrastructure with no holds barred. It's a perfect match," Aaronson stated.

"We've done full testing to understand what happens during any single component failure in the pair of SQL Server systems. We found that Avance gives our customers the high availability needed for 24/7 access to their data. During any single component failure a customers' access to their data is seamless from moment to moment."

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Stratus Avance software turns industry-standard computer servers into a highly reliable, very affordable solution that ensures 24/7 availability. Leveraging the management solution included with Avance, built-in predictive features identify, report and handle faults before they cause application outages, data loss or user disconnects. Automatic resource sharing among the x86 server pair lets applications ride through most hardware and software problems automatically, including disk and network subsystem failure.

High availability without the effort

One way that Avance software prevents unplanned downtime and data loss is by monitoring server operation predictively. If the software detects a potential issue on the primary server, it isolates the fault and migrates the workload to the secondary server without missing a beat. At the same time, the company's IT people and the Stratus 24-hour support center are notified automatically about the type of fault and its location.

"Avance software allows us to manage one primary service. By looking at the management GUI (graphical user interface), we know which state both systems are in at all times," observed Aaronson.

"Avance software allows us to manage one primary service. Using the management GUI, we can quickly know which state both systems are in at all times."

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Even though the IT team had no prior experience with Avance software, implementing the high availability solution was smooth.

doeLegal's technical staff consulted with Stratus technical support by phone during the proof of concept and testing stages. Said Aaronson, "Stratus tech support has been great. They've been very responsive and they've helped us throughout testing and production implementation."

doeLegal is in the process of migrating its e-billing clients to the new environment. Because a typical customer potentially manages thousands of legal invoices every month, doeLegal forecasts the SQL Server database could grow to multiple terabytes. The server hardware running the Avance solution is connected to a RAID Tier 1 storage array which provides the back-end storage capacity.

Ready to grow

In addition, doeLegal is able to do more with the Stratus Avance solution than the IT team originally planned. Virtualization is part of Avance high availability at no extra cost.

The company has gained flexibility as a result. doeLegal will be able to add new virtual servers easily, and use live migration between server nodes to avoid downtime during planned maintenance.

"As we look at the future of our high availability environment, we can use virtualization to help us grow and deploy Microsoft-based servers while consolidating the number of physical servers in our data center. With Avance we won't have a lot of change or concern about administering HA in a new part of our environment," noted Aaronson.

Business impact

“The biggest difference with Avance software is I can give my customers confidence — because I have the confidence — that we have an efficiently managed high availability environment for their production data,” said Aaronson.

“What Avance software gives us is high availability and real-time replication. Without Avance software, if you have a single environmental failure, it would be extremely difficult to guarantee our customers will be able to continue to see and work on their production data with no impact or downtime.”

As expected, everyday management of Avance high availability is proving easier than the legacy solution. “We can rely on Avance software to synchronize data from the primary server to the secondary server. My team doesn’t have to allocate extra time to perform secondary maintenance tasks,” Aaronson stated.

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Aaronson noted that simplifying management has saved the company money, and that acquiring the Avance solution was less expensive than building a traditional HA cluster for SQL Server.

He added, “As we continue to grow and add more customers, we have a great transition to what we’ll need to do in the future for high availability, server consolidation and increased performance to keep serving our clients well.”

About Stratus

Stratus delivers uptime for the applications its customers depend on most for their success. With its ultra-reliable servers, software and services, Stratus® products help to save lives and to protect the business and reputations of companies, institutions, and governments the world over.

To learn more about worry-free computing, visit www.stratus.com

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