

A space to call your own

The work area recovery market is going through a period of change as it looks to adapt to developments in both working practices and the risk landscape. Will the increased use of the cloud, combined with the seemingly remorseless advance of home and remote working for example see traditional WAR relegated to one of yesterday's business continuity strategies? Or will a greater reliance on technology increase the need for robust WAR strategies?

Power outages are the most common reason that companies cite today for using external workplace facilities. And Sungard Availability Services' 2019 annual *Disaster Landscape* invocation statistics calculates that power outages may be up some 77 per cent y-o-y.

Vice-president of global product management at the vendor, Patrick Morley, comments: "Our statistics show that, as reliance on technology

How are changes in modern working practices impacting the need for, and demands of, work area recovery in the UK? Ant Gould examines the provision of WAR and the impact of recent developments on the market and its providers

- The work area recovery market is evolving in line with both flexible working practices and better access to the cloud, software and data recovery.
- In an incident, it is no longer vital to be in the same building as your data recovery servers, so a more flexible recovery is now viable and convenient.
- Whilst companies asking for fewer seats, there is still the need for certainty of resources for certain functions, in particular the crisis management team.

has grown, the impact of its failure has become more wide-ranging and more detrimental to business operations. Network outages (13 per cent) remain the second most common business crisis stemming from causes including hardware failures, cyber attacks and human error."

Chief executive officer at London-focused WAR provider, Fortress Availability Services, Andrew Lawton, concurs, adding: "A major driver for the WAR market is the risk of cyber

attack (particularly ransomware), police cordon (these tend to be a lot larger and in place for longer now), and protest occupying the building or area. These add to the usual building problems such as comms failure, aircon units failing and fires/floods."

At the same time, however, ever fewer staff are 100 per cent office-based throughout the working week – in part due to an increase in flexible working, and supported by greater use of the cloud. Research by the Trades





Union Congress, for instance, shows that 1.6 million employees regularly worked from home in 2017.

The work area recovery market is evolving in line with both flexible working practices and better access to cloud-based services, software and data recovery, according to managing director of workplace recovery at Regus, Dan Perrin.

“During an incident, it is no longer vital to be in the same building as your data recovery servers, so a more flexible recovery – either using work from home strategies or a more flexible office based recovery plan is a viable and often more convenient option,” he says.

“Workplace recovery previously relied mainly on static sites, which, during an invocation, risked being too close to the incident and impacted by the same event or too far, requiring staff members to travel further than their normal commute – potentially across an impact zone in the case of natural disasters, travel strikes...and terrorist attacks.”

Andy Dunn, commercial sales director at WAR provider Daisy Corporate Services acknowledges

“Certainty of resources is still needed for the crisis management team, core business functions, and those to which WFH is not suited, such as trading”

that the traditional market has been somewhat in decline as the customer’s perception of traditional services wanes, and new perceptions and confidence in cloud and in-house solutions develop to suit changing priorities and budget planning.

“We have seen instances where an organisation’s use of new technology allows for secure home working as an option, and the business believes that this can be used as an alternative to a work area recovery solution. However, in our experience, this is not usually tested as a viable option in a disaster recovery scenario,” he says.

Whilst the cloud and home working have seen companies asking for fewer WAR seats, there is still the need for certainty of resources for the crisis management team and core business functions, or those functions that home working is not suited

for – such as trading or dealing with customer data or confidential market or company data.

“Companies also know that people work more creatively and make better and faster decisions when working physically together and so at time of a disaster staff working at their best is critical,” Lawton explains.

The amount of time that places of work are inaccessible is also increasing, which means that a work area recovery solution needs to provide the flexibility to rapidly bring people together so that they can work collaboratively and creatively at the start of the incident and return to normal operations as smoothly as possible. This requires streamlined interfacing with the organisation’s home-working capability.

“Cloud technology offers many benefits that can help an organisation ensure that their data and systems are resilient – but you have to be able to access it. Organisations put network resilience in place so that employees can access cloud-based services in the office, but it is unlikely that all their employees have implemented a similar level of resilience in their

home networks or favourite remote location,” Morley explains.

Working from home is frequently built in to WAR strategies and business continuity plans and is a convenient option for a lot of staff for short incidents, but research conducted by Regus shows that tolerance of WFH decreases as the length of incident increases.

“Past the first week to ten days, factors such as accessibility to suitable seating and desk space, distractions from home life and isolation from teams can have a negative impact on productivity and communication. Work from home also doesn’t cater for those customer-facing businesses needing to engage directly with clients on a regular basis,” Perrin explains, adding that his clients opt increasingly for recovery based on the crisis at the time of the crisis, allowing clients to recover their staff close to the offices or homes, dependent on the incident at hand.

Smaller invocations

Seat numbers are also down. “In terms of seat requests, we are seeing less demand for new larger dedicated requirements due to the market shifts we’ve described,” explains Dunn. “We do still see occasional bids of this type, but business environments are changing across the board.” Modern WAR is a mixture of syndicated, dedicated and multi-site use to answer changing customer needs.

Lawton concurs: “The requirement has changed, with the need for fewer seats. Our recovery centre only has 80 positions as a consequence.”

A trend towards smaller invocations is confirmed by Morley. “We have spotted an increasing trend for a small number of dedicated seats being taken in conjunction with a larger requirement for shared

or syndicated capacity. Whilst this is, in part, due to the increased regulatory scrutiny, many companies are recognising that their reputation depends on being able to continue to deliver products and services that are critical to their customers’ needs.

“In the past, organisations very much focused on the rapid resumption of their own normal operations. However, in today’s consumer-driven market, the primary focus is on providing what the customer needs first and what the organisation wants later.”

Dunn says a typical invocation increasingly stems from a cyber-related event or a network issue. “We currently have three live invocations for cyber threat response. We are seeing invocations of this nature lasting longer than those for more traditional flood or fire responses.”

As ever, flexibility remains key in WAR – whatever the type or size, and, overall, providers are adapting to the changing demand, using traditional services in new, innovative ways to meet the changing nature of the threat landscape and to cater for new forms of disruption that can arise on so many levels.

“For us, this means increased integration of services that we deliver from our wider portfolio, mobile, security, unified communications and managed services for example,” Dunn explains. “For us, 5G presents opportunities for increasing the reach of our recovery solutions with enhanced security capabilities based around a single device for a seamless experience to reach more of the business than traditional WAR ever could.”

The belief that employees, particularly crisis teams, need to be physically together may change as a generation brought up on social media, virtual meetings and remote

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working begin to dominate the workplace; and new technology may soon reduce the security issues around accessing systems, but for now at least the arguments for a robust WAR strategy – rather than attempting to muddle through – still stack up.

Case Study: Beazley

Specialist insurer Beazley, which has a strong presence in the cyber insurance market, has invested in WAR facilities to combat potential reputational damage and loss of revenue, and to avoid potential sanctions and financial penalties as a regulated entity.

Beazley’s view is that while in the short-term its workforce could ‘muddle through’ with a combination of working from home or out of a local hotel or coffee shop, should disruption last more than a few days teams would need a central workspace to work together productively. This is particularly so in the event of IT failure when critical technical staff need to gather in one place to collaborate on fixing the problem.

Facilities manager at Beazley Linda Anderson says that the company recognised that an outage could potentially cause it to lose business if customers couldn’t access its vital systems, so decided to invest in a purpose-built alternative workplace.

Beazley contracts 80 workplace positions at Fortress AS’ newly built Work Area Recovery Centre at Crossharbour in London’s Docklands – outside the security cordon for the City of London’s Square Mile, yet still easily accessible for staff.

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