

Affordable Enterprise-Grade Disaster Recovery Using Microsoft Azure



Introduction

Until recently, enterprise-grade disaster recovery had been prohibitively expensive for most organizations. Thanks to the rapid development of cloud infrastructure, organizations can now attain top-of-the-line disaster recovery capabilities into Microsoft Azure at a fraction of the cost.

The Challenge

An enterprise-grade disaster recovery (DR) solution is no longer something that is “nice to have.” Nor can it be a document approved by the Board of Directors but hasn't been touched or tested in years. Why not? In addition to the probability of damaging your hard-earned reputation, downtime also comes with major costs. Gartner estimates the average cost of IT downtime at \$5,600 per minute, which can add up quickly.

If your organization is like other large-scale businesses today, you understand the critical need to recover rapidly from IT outages, application failures, or malicious attacks in order to ensure business resilience, stay competitive, and avoid regulatory penalties. Not only do your employees need to access company systems 24/7, but your global customers also expect constant availability.

So what's the problem? Why don't all enterprises have airtight, 100% reliable, and frequently tested disaster recovery strategies in place? Can't IT departments just set up multiple data centers that continually replicate workloads, and when a disaster strikes, redirect to the DR site?

It turns out that for many organizations, traditional enterprise-grade DR solutions – with near-zero Recovery Point Objectives (RPOs) and Recovery Time Objectives (RTOs) – are prohibitively expensive due to heavy capital expenditures (CapEx) and/or costly duplicate third-party software and services.

As a result, some organizations choose to take the risk of having only a backup system, which enables data retrieval, but does not prevent costly downtime because of its long data recovery times. Other companies choose to protect only the most essential servers, which leaves their business vulnerable. Many companies that do lay out a substantial initial investment in DR later dedicate resources to other pressing IT needs. But “set it and forget it” doesn't work for DR — a system that quickly becomes obsolete if not tested frequently.

The solution to this challenge lies in the cloud. Today, **businesses can attain top-of-the-line IT resilience at a fraction of the cost** by moving their DR to the cloud.

In this white paper, we examine the three main DR strategies that are currently used by enterprises — **On-Premise Disaster Recovery, Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS), and Cloud-Based Disaster Recovery** — with a focus on the expected costs of each strategy. We

will also touch upon the benefits and risks of each strategy, to help your organization decide if leveraging the cloud, and specifically Microsoft Azure, for DR is the right approach for your business.

On-Premise Disaster Recovery

Enterprises have traditionally handled IT disaster recovery internally. Keeping a robust on-premise DR solution in place and up-to-date requires a large investment of resources.

Hardware: Most on-premise DR solutions depend on the purchase of duplicate servers on-site or at a secondary location to be used in the event of an outage. These servers incur both CapEx and ongoing IT operating expenses (including power and cooling). Moreover, they typically require a hardware refresh every three to five years.

Software Licenses: In order to launch recovery machines when source machines fail, on-premise DR solutions commonly require maintaining duplicate third-party software licenses and, in some cases, application- or DR-specific replication software. This can lead to high expenditures, especially for enterprises that use costly applications from vendors such as Oracle, SAP, and Microsoft.

DR Infrastructure & Services: Any IT resilience solution must be able to restore entire systems to their pre-disaster state. On-premise DR solutions require the purchase of data protection software and, in certain cases, replication appliances. If the organization needs enterprise-grade RTOs and RPOs, they have to pay for duplicate compute and storage infrastructure at their DR site.

Management & Monitoring: IT staff resources are necessary to continually manage and monitor the DR hardware, software, and infrastructure.

Disaster Recovery as a Service

On-premise DR, many organizations turn to third-party Disaster Recovery as a Service (DRaaS) providers to administer failover support in the event of a disaster. The quality of this kind of DR solution depends on the particular DRaaS provider's technology, processes, and service-level agreements (SLAs).

Hardware: When using DRaaS, organizations do not need to purchase duplicate servers or maintain a duplicate data center on their own. Rather, their duplicate servers are located in data centers or colocation centers run by their DRaaS provider.

Software Licenses: Depending on the applications protected and replication methods used, organizations may still need to purchase duplicate licenses for their applications if they want them to be available quickly during a disaster.

DR Infrastructure & Services: Given the underprovisioning of hardware based on an assumption that not all customers will require failover at the same time, DRaaS providers are able to offer lower costs for standby machines as compared with an on-premise DR implementation. Nonetheless, a DRaaS provider's ability to underprovision servers effectively is negligible compared to the economy of scale provided by the cloud, and is therefore a more costly option. In addition, there may also be added costs associated with third-party application licenses, depending on the replication method used.

Management & Monitoring: Organizations rely on their DRaaS provider to handle most of the management and monitoring of their DR site. While they do not have to pay for additional on-premise IT staff, they do have to pay their DRaaS provider. Such costs differ among the various vendors.

Additional Benefits of Disaster Recovery Into Azure

While cloud-based disaster recovery is clearly the least expensive approach, you may be wondering whether this "cheaper" option is as effective and enterprise-grade as an on-premise or DRaaS solution. The answer is yes. Not only does cloud-based DR technology provide top-of-the-line DR, but it provides capabilities not available with other DR strategies, including:

- **Easy Testability** — Quickly spin up machines for your periodic DR drills without disrupting your source environment.
- **Self-Service DR** — Configure your Azure environment, replicate your servers, and perform DR drills whenever you want. Deployment is easy, and access to cloud resources is instantaneous.
- **Flexibility Between Infrastructures** — Protect physical, virtual, or cloud-based source machines by replicating them into a DR site in any Azure region(s).

FAQs About Cloud-Based Disaster Recovery Into Azure

For some enterprises, moving DR to the public cloud may seem like a radical move. However, in recent years, more and more enterprises, government entities, hospitals, and flagship academic institutions have done so. Microsoft Azure and other leading public clouds offer enterprise-grade security, compliance, and data integrity. As such, many organizations have declared cloud-first initiatives to outsource infrastructure to the public cloud wherever possible, with DR being one of the first candidates.

The technology you choose for your cloud-based DR can vary greatly from one vendor to another. Some DR solutions cannot guarantee consistency or support all of your applications, which would impact your implementation success rate. Other technologies may impact your server performance or deliver inadequate RPOs or RTOs. The right technology, however, will enable you to achieve the enterprise-grade resilience and performance of on-premise and DRaaS solutions, with the dramatic cost reduction of leveraging the cloud for DR.

Below, we address some of the concerns you may have specific to cloud-based DR into Azure, as well as questions to consider when evaluating the right DR solution for your enterprise.

What RPO can I achieve when using Azure to protect my workloads? How much data loss might I experience during a disaster?

When using continuous block-level replication DR technologies, you should expect near-zero RPO (normally seconds or less), depending on the latency and network quality between your source servers and target Azure region.

What RTO can I achieve when using Azure as target infrastructure? How long will it take me to failover into Azure during a disaster?

Two key capabilities that enable quick recovery into Azure are: 1) automated conversion of your source server(s) into

Cost Comparison of 3 Disaster Recovery Strategies*

	Small Enterprise			Large Enterprise		
# Servers	250			750		
DR Strategy	On-Premise	DRaaS	Cloud-Based	On-Premise	DRaaS	Cloud-Based
DR Hardware	\$1,997,000	\$378,000	\$39,000	\$6,818,000	\$1,309,000	\$118,000
DR Infrastructure, Licensing, & Services	\$1,284,000	\$984,000	\$205,000	\$4,500,000	\$3,237,000	\$532,000
Total	\$3,281,000	\$1,362,000	\$244,000	\$11,318,000	\$4,546,000	\$650,000

*Estimated annual cost. Figures may vary based on target region or zone.

Azure virtual machine (VM) instances, and 2) mass-scale DR orchestration. Cloud-based DR technologies that include these two capabilities deliver recovery times of minutes and can launch all of your target servers in parallel, on a mass scale.

Can Azure support my physical and virtual machines? What about legacy applications?

A cloud-based DR solution must perform replication at the OS level (rather than hypervisor or SAN level) in order to support recovery of any type of infrastructure into Azure, including physical, any type of virtual hypervisor, cloud-based, and colocated servers. When the replication is conducted at the block level, any file system or application is transparently supported. Common workloads include the suite of databases and applications from vendors such as Oracle, SAP, and Microsoft.

Is it possible to use Azure for disaster recovery without moving my primary workloads to Azure?

Absolutely. When you use Azure as DR target infrastructure, you simply have a dormant copy of your workloads as Azure VM instances, which can then be fully launched whenever you choose to do so. You can continue to use any infrastructure you choose for your production environment, as long as your DR solution performs block-level replication.

Isn't putting my DR in the cloud a security risk?

As long as your DR solution uses proper data-at-rest and data-in-transit encryption, your data is secure. If desired, request that your DR solution allow you to be in control of the data path for the replication traffic over your private networks. Ask your Microsoft Azure representative any specific questions you might have about meeting the regulatory compliance requirements applicable to your business.

Won't setting up DR in Azure disrupt my source system?

This entirely depends on the DR solution. Some cloud-based DR solutions require rebooting your system, or taking frequent snapshots, and may impact system performance or require local storage at the expense of your primary applications; others are designed to be non-intrusive.

How can I conduct DR drills with a cloud-based DR solution?

DR drills are much easier when using the cloud as a target. On-premise and DRaaS DR strategies require you to ensure that the resources needed for the drill are provisioned and paid for in advance, and in some cases require disrupting source applications to avoid network conflicts. However, when using the cloud as a DR target, you can simply request the resources when needed, and only pay for them upon use. Furthermore, you can spin up your DR VM instances easily into Azure in complete isolation, thereby performing DR drills without any impact or conflict with your source applications.

If I run my DR VM instances in Azure, how time-consuming and costly will the failback into my primary infrastructure be, once the disaster is over?

With some solutions, this can be a cumbersome manual process of setting up your source servers and applications from scratch, moving the data, and then keeping it in sync until the point of failback. Other solutions allow you to simply reverse the replication directly and keep the data in real-time sync back to your primary site within minutes, once the disaster is over and you're ready for failback.

What if my servers experience a virus, hacker, or ransomware attack that compromises my data, or a mere database corruption that requires me to recover to a previous point in time. Is point-in-time recovery possible?

With the appropriate cloud-based DR solution, you can recover back to previous consistent points in time.

Features & Benefits of 3 Disaster Recovery Strategies

	On-Premise	DRaaS	Cloud-Based
Enterprise-Grade	✓	✓	✓
Total Cost of Ownership	High	Medium	Low
Automated Deployment & Maintenance	✗	✓	✓
Easy Testability	✗	✗	✓
Easy Scalability	✗	✓	✓
Self-Service DR	✗	✗	✓
Flexibility Between Infrastructures	✗	✗	✓
Software-Defined DR Site	✗	✗	✓



CloudEndure Disaster Recovery, Continuous Backup, and Live Migration Into Azure

One Powerful IT Resilience Suite Across All Infrastructure

Mobilize any workload to Azure and back, cutting DR infrastructure costs by up to 80%.

Business as Usual. Always.

CloudEndure provides reliable business continuity solutions that prevent data loss and downtime due to human errors, network failures, external threats, or any other disruptions. Our multi-tier IT Resilience Suite for the Hybrid Cloud offers [Disaster Recovery](#), [Continuous Backup](#), and [Live Migration](#) of any application from any physical, virtual, or cloud-based source to any target infrastructure, including Amazon Web Services (AWS), Google Cloud Platform (GCP), Microsoft Azure, VMware, OpenStack, and Oracle Cloud. As such, CloudEndure is uniquely qualified to support large-scale, heterogeneous environments with diverse applications and infrastructure. Customers rely on CloudEndure to ensure business as usual,

always. Our technology delivers on this promise with continuous block-level replication and application stack orchestration — at the touch of a button, within minutes, and with the latest data. CloudEndure — IT Resilience for the Hybrid Cloud. For more information, visit www.cloudendure.com.

Discover how CloudEndure can help your organization achieve affordable enterprise-grade disaster recovery using Microsoft Azure.

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