Commercial National Bank
Managed Services for iTERA

"Managed Services for iTERA gives us peace of mind. Even if we developed the institutional expertise ourselves, it would never be at their level."

- Austin Stanley, IT Manager

Critical Issue

Because it has a small staff, Commercial National Bank's IT department must focus on core business functions and technologies. Vision Solutions Managed Services allows the bank to utilize extensive iTERA Availability and HA/DR skills and experience, without straining in-house human resources.

Business Challenge

To ensure high availability (HA), Commercial National Bank (CNB) uses iTERA Availability to replicate data and applications from its IBM i-based Fiserv core banking applications to a second server in real time.

After using iTERA Availability for about four years, the bank experienced some IT staff turnover. This created a challenge. It could train someone new to monitor the replication environment and perform periodic role swap tests to ensure the HA server was always ready to assume the production role. However, this would incur training and lost-time costs. In addition, if that person left, those skills would again leave the company.

This might not be a problem for larger companies that can afford to cross-train a number of people. But that is not the case at CNB. "We have a few people wearing a number of hats," explained Austin Stanley, IT Manager. "So we are limited in the number of things we can develop expertise in."

Yet, high availability/disaster recovery (HA/DR) expertise and iTERA Availability-specific skills are critical for CNB. If its core banking system were unavailable, much of its banking operations would stop. Thus, extended downtime or any data loss would, to say the least, have serious consequences for the bank.

Business Profile

Organization Name:
Commercial National Bank

Headquarters:
Texarkana, Arkansas

Industry:
Banking

Business Environment:
- Founded: 1964
- Assets: $219 million (March, 2017)
- Employees: 62 (March, 2017)
- 6 branches
- 24 x 7 operations

Implementation Team:
Commercial National Bank and Vision Solutions

Solution

The bank's primary server is in downtown Texarkana. The HA server is more than 20 miles away. Thus, should a disaster strike the primary location, or if the primary server needs to be taken offline for maintenance, the HA server can quickly take over the production role.

As a result, CNB has complete confidence that its core banking data and applications will always be available, without exception. And Vision Solutions Managed Services allows it to maintain that confidence without the need for in-house HA/DR or iTERA Availability expertise.

Managed Services is responsible for maintaining the peak performance and reliability of the replication processes and failover capabilities. This includes remotely monitoring iTERA Availability to ensure it is functioning properly, without significant replication lags. The Managed Services team also performs periodic virtual role swaps to ensure that the backup system is always ready to take on the production role. iTERA Availability's virtual role swap feature makes it possible to verify HA server readiness by allowing tests to be run on it, while production users continue to use the primary server for production work. When the role swap tests are complete, the virtual role swap feature reverses the changes made on the HA server and brings it back in synch with the production server.

Stanley notes that a major benefit that Vision Solutions Managed Services brings to the iTERA Availability solution is expertise. "They developed the software," he said. The Managed Services professional "works with iTERA every day, all day. That's all she does. If we had to do it, it would be just one of many areas of expertise we have to develop."

Stanley also sees cost savings from the bank's use of Managed Services. He does not have to send someone for training and then reacquire those skills in the event of future IT staff turnover.

But the biggest benefit he receives is peace of mind. He knows that iTERA Availability is always working reliably to ensure the availability of the bank's systems.

And CNB receives these benefits even if a disaster never strikes. For example, during a migration to a new IBM Power Systems server, Vision Solutions Managed Services helped CNB to use iTERA Availability to replicate data to the new server, while the old server continued production operations unimpeded. iTERA Availability then kept the old and new servers synchronized while the bank validated the readiness of the new server. Downtime during the switchover from the old to the new server was limited to literally no more than a few minutes.

Results

- Ensures the availability of core banking data and applications
- Eliminates the need for in-house HA/DR-and iTERA-specific skills
- Reduces training costs
- Minimizes downtime for server migrations
- Delivers peace of mind

Technologies

Software:
- iTERA Availability
- IBM i
- Fiserv

Hardware:
- IBM Power Systems