

CREATIVE SOLUTIONS ENSURE BUSINESS CONTINUITY



HENK VAN DER WATT, EDCON

IT'S SAID THAT EVERY CLOUD HAS A SILVER LINING, AND WHEN EDCON'S PREVIOUS DISASTER RECOVERY SYSTEM FAILED, SHODEN BECAME THAT SILVER LINING.

WORDS **ADRIAN HINCHCLIFFE**

Disaster recovery systems – they're a bit like your insurance or medical aid policies. It's only when things have gone wrong that you realise how effective, or not, they actually are.

For Henk van der Watt, service delivery executive manager at Edcon, that case was put to the test in 2005. "We had a failure in the tape-based data recovery system we were using at the time, and we weren't able to recover some vital data," he says. "This really brought home the

importance of reliability in our disaster recovery systems."

After this moment of realisation, Van der Watt set about finding a more professional approach that would take Edcon's storage and backup and recovery systems to the next level. As one of the leading clothing, footwear and textiles retail groups in southern Africa, having accurate and up-to-date information is a critical part of Edcon's operations and ensuring business continuity.

As the result of intensive research of the market players, Edcon engaged Shoden Data Systems. "There were other companies out there, but Shoden has a creative approach to finding the right solution, and a creative approach when it comes to the financial options. Both of those are very appealing to us. We are driven by costs and business processes, not by having the latest technology for the sake of it. Shoden took the time to understand our business and objectives, and developed a reliable and economical solution to fit our needs," he says.

The long-term disaster recovery strategy developed was designed to be deployed in cost-effective phases over a number of years, and is currently nearing completion of the final stage.

IN ACTION

Van der Watt gives one of Edcon's ERPs as an example of the system in action. Taking automated, regular snapshots of the batches of data, rather than a once-per-day approach, recovery times are much quicker, and recovery of data is more precise and up to date. This automation saves time from an administration perspective. With an outsourced mainframe, backing up data on a remote system also means less media management, which is another administration headache solved. Edcon has also achieved cost savings from a reduction in the number of MIPS leased from the data centre owner by not needing to regularly open backup sessions.

"As we lease our infrastructure, it was important that Shoden was able to effectively work with the data centre owners," says Van der Watt. He adds that introducing a new service provider into a data centre can sometimes create tension

and unnecessary conflict, but there were no such issues with Shoden.

"For us, it's important that they are competitive without being destructive in their relationships with our other suppliers. They understand the importance of building relationships and collaboration," he says.

Van der Watt also adds that Shoden's people have always been accessible and happy to give their time and insight when he had questions around a new technical development, for example. "The Shoden team is very knowledgeable and up to date on technology, and I often refer to them for thought leadership.

"What's nice is they will give you the best

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answer on the latest trend, whether they sell a solution that supports it or not. There is a lot of integrity among the team and they tell me whether they think a solution or trend is right for Edcon. For me, they have taken on the role of trusted advisor," he says.

Going forward, Van der Watt believes that the next issue for Edcon to address will be data compression in storage. By leasing infrastructure space, the more data stored, the higher the cost. As with any enterprise, data requirements for storage are increasing exponentially.

Looking to decrease these costs, and find the right solution, Van der Watt is confident Shoden will continue to guide and support Edcon. **B**