

CASE STUDY



MIDAMERICA BANK



MidAmerica Bank Savings and Disaster Recovery with Double-Take

In 1996, MidAmerica Bank had sixteen branch offices in the Chicago area. The bank ended 2002 with thirty-four offices, profits and income per share that surpassed the preceding year, and continued growth on the horizon. MidAmerica had become the Chicago metropolitan area's ninth largest bank in deposit share. The bank's success was more remarkable because much of this growth had occurred when the rest of the economy was sagging.

"During their last annual audit, MidAmerica Bank's Double-Take solution for back up and recovery of branch data exceeded expectations and requirements." *Ray Zamora, Vice President of Network Operations, MidAmerica Bank*

Market focus, selective acquisitions, and meticulous attention to the bottom line were all fundamental to MidAmerica's success. "The bank's strategy has enabled good planning through business and economic cycles," said Ray Zamora, MidAmerica's Vice President of Network Operations. "We adjust our marketing focus to fit with the shifts and changes of the economy, and spend wisely, carefully controlling staff growth, and focusing on productivity and service."

As the bank evolved, so, too, did the demand for improved Disaster Recovery. While tape back-up had been sufficient in the past, MidAmerica wanted a more sophisticated and economical solution for superior data protection. The need for change led the bank to Double-Take® from NSI® Software.

About NSI Software

Established in 1991, NSI Software, together with its partners, delivers award-winning data replication and high availability software and services. NSI Software products, including Double-Take and GeoCluster™, enable companies to recover quickly and easily from disasters, and continue to provide business-critical information for demanding customer environments. NSI Software's patented technologies reduce downtime, protect data and applications, and keep businesses running across geographically dispersed networks. Industry leaders Dell, HP and IBM have selected Double-Take as the replication engine of choice for their NAS and server devices.

Critical Need for Cost-efficient Accuracy

MidAmerica wanted to protect teller-based data—transaction records, check ordering applications, and spreadsheets—in each branch office. Initially the bank relied on tape back-up, but that solution presented several disadvantages.

The cost of tape back-up was becoming exorbitant. Each branch had to spend \$7000 to \$10,000 for tape drive, software, and initial set up requiring about eight hours, as well as the repeated cost of media, maintenance, communications, and transport. Yet this costly system failed to guarantee the protection of all records because tape back-up lags behind

real time. In the event of a failure, the gap results in the irretrievable loss of some transactions and records.

Another problem for MidAmerica was the dependence on non-technical staff for tape management. People trained to serve customers were inexpertly changing tapes. “There were always irksome questions, especially with so many branches,” said Ray Zamora. “Did they make the tape change? Did they do it correctly? Did they install new tape or erase data?”

These inefficiencies and expenses were in conflict with MidAmerica’s objective of controlling costs while providing quality service. When the bank upgraded to a Dell EMC Storage Area Network (SAN), they re-evaluated options for protecting branch data. Armed with the bank’s requirements for data storage and back up speed, Dell researched options and recommended Double-Take from NSI.

Double-Take Delivers Savings

When relying on tape back-up alone, MidAmerica Bank had to allow about an hour per branch for weekly technical maintenance and verification. With thirty-four branches, the support was roughly equal to the cost of a full time employee. Adding Double-Take to the equation eliminated that expense, and that’s only the start of the savings. Set up time for Double-Take is about fifteen minutes, compared to eight hours—a full day’s work—for tape back-up. With Double-Take, the branches have no recurring expense for tapes and maintenance and no unskilled employees taking responsibility for tape management because everything is centralized.

“Double-Take saves us about \$50,000 annually by eliminating the need for technical maintenance and assistance. We also save with the simple set up which is less than a tenth the cost of setting up the tape drives. And there is no recurring hardware maintenance cost and no loss of employee time in supervising the back-up process.” **Ray Zamora**

“We can’t even begin to put a cost to the assurance we get from Double-Take’s operation,” said Mr. Zamora. “No nagging questions, no need for technical supervision... just fast and efficient back-up.”

The savings extends to MidAmerica’s use of their T1 bandwidth as well. The bank was determined to maximize use of available bandwidth for as long as possible, ideally for another 4 or more

years. Double-Take backs up asynchronously, copying and transferring only data changes, so replication to the central server uses minimal bandwidth and minimal overhead on network and servers. With no additional hardware and no user intervention between source and target, Double-Take delivers a back-up and recovery solution without bottlenecks, allowing operations to continue unimpeded. The result: cost-efficient quality service, data protection, and economical use of available bandwidth.

“Efficiency is key,” said Ray Zamora. “We grow by acquisition, merge new offices into our system, all the while working on the quality that has helped us reach our position in the market.”

Implementation

MidAmerica Bank tested NSI’s solution and made their decision: Double-Take was the right choice for data protection.

“Experience has taught us to stick with vendors respected in the Microsoft arena,” said Mr. Zamora. “NSI is a Microsoft Gold Certified Partner, a credential that assures smooth implementation, centralization, and troubleshooting. The wisdom of our choice has been

confirmed by the success of the implementation and the rapid response we get any time we have a call or question to NSI.”

MidAmerica Bank uses Double-Take on a Windows 2000 platform in thirty-four branch offices, backing up user data from remote sites to a central server in Naperville, Illinois. Every office holds two Double-Take licenses for Disaster Recovery. Each branch office has a Dell server with RAID 5 storage that replicates to a lower cost PC loaded with the server operating system. This PC provides local Disaster Recovery capability for the office and also serves as the source replicating bank data to the centralized target server, attached to the central Dell/EMC SAN in Naperville.

By replicating only byte level changes, on a daily basis, the bank backs up 70 MB of new data from all branches. Since implementing Double-Take, MidAmerica Bank has replicated 52 Gigabytes of data from all source servers to the target.

Exceeding Expectations

Double-Take simplifies at least one aspect of future growth for the bank. As MidAmerica continues to acquire new offices, each additional branch will become part of the system backing up to the central Naperville server. No new hardware, no complex installations, no data loss—just the requisite licenses for Double-Take and a simple implementation. With several new branches coming through acquisitions, MidAmerica Bank expects to have 102 Double-Take licenses by June 2003, and 122 licenses by the end of 2003.

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Disaster Recovery is not just a matter of good customer service for a bank; it’s a government requirement. Regulations from the Office of Thrift and Supervision (OTS) place stringent controls on the way banks manage data. In the last annual

audit, Double-Take enabled MidAmerica to meet OTS requirements for storing remote branch data offsite.

“Our initial focus has been on Disaster Recovery, but local failover from server to PC has been an important benefit,” said Ray Zamora. “Double-Take will be vital as we enhance our failover capability and bring it down to minutes.”

As MidAmerica Bank continues to grow NSI and Double-Take will continue to surpass the expectations of a dynamic business with a burgeoning client base.

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