

# Rate Your "Relationship" with Your Disaster Recovery Plan



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Leo Wrobel presents a thought-provoking technical parody for the New Year!

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It's a new year (at the time of this writing), but I'm not ready to get back to work yet. First I'd like to have a few more laughs and maybe a bit more vacation. You probably feel the same way. Therefore, in order to ease our transition from the end of the holidays (and to start our brains thinking again about disaster recovery planning), I decided to start off this year with something easy and fun: a "rate your relationship" quiz for your disaster recovery plan! Take the quiz and see how you stack up.

## Are You Too Dependent on Your "Significant Server?"

How many mainline revenue-impacting applications do you have on your most critical server? What would be the impact of the loss of that server? As a general rule, many applications that don't have an immediate effect on revenue (accounts payable, for example) still reside in the "big iron" safety of the mainframe environment. Meanwhile, applications that support revenue production (order entry, for instance) are on more distributed platforms.

Have you taken stock of which applications have migrated where? If your answer is *yes*, give yourself five points. If your answer is *no* or *not sure*, deduct five points.

## Do You Need Higher Standards in Your Disaster Recovery Relationship?

A few months ago, I presented a series of InformIT articles on [operating and security standards](#). As you may recall, *operating standards* are the changes you make in your day-to-day operating environment to ensure that your recovery plan executes gracefully. As the name implies, *security standards* consist of things like card-key access to equipment rooms, password protection on critical components, and change-control procedures.

On a scale from 1 to 10, rate each of your organization's standards:

- Up-to-date call lists for getting people back to work after a disaster
- Equipment room guarded by physical access controls such as card keys
- Complete documentation of equipment installations, including such things as floor grid diagrams and emergency shutdown procedures.
- Offsite storage of magnetic material and key documents
- Secure servers locations. (If you have a server in the janitor's closet, give yourself an automatic zero on this item.)
- Fire protection. Add 10 points for any of the following three items in your equipment room:
  - Dry pipe sprinklers.
  - Fire extinguishers of the proper type.
  - Formal written policy banning combustibles from the equipment room

## January Is the Month for Aquarians! Are You Drawn to Water Signs?

Water where it doesn't belong is one of the most common causes of disasters. Survey your building and grounds for any water sources, document them, and make sure that you know where shutoff valves are located. Be sure to consider the following areas:

- Ground water from outside
- Roof
- Drinking fountains and restroom:
- Air conditioning condensers
- Sprinklers
- Sewers and drains

If you've dedicated any thought to water in these areas (be honest), give yourself 0 points. If you have written procedures for dealing with water from at least three of these areas, award yourself 100 points.

## Why Doesn't He Call

Telecommunications disruptions can quickly turn catastrophic, especially if they affect the main revenue-producing systems for the company. It does little good to have systems online if customers can't call in or click in to use the system. Consider the amount of business your company does through online systems and assign the point value in the following table.

| Percentage | Point Value |
|------------|-------------|
| 10%        | 10          |
| 20%        | 20          |
| 30%        | 30          |
| 40%        | 40          |
| 50%        | 50          |
| 60%        | 60          |
| 70%        | 70          |
| 80%        | 80          |
| 90%        | 90          |
| 100%       | 100         |

Ask your manager the same question. If your answer is within 20% of hers, add 50 points.

Now consider the following questions and add 10 points for each item you have in place:

- Backup for T1 service via wireless service of any kind (point-to-point, point-to-multipoint, microwave, satellite etc.)
- Two-way radios for command and control in a disaster
- Priority scheme for restoration of your most critical 800 and local number
- Dual-fed counter-rotating fiber optic ring or synchronous optical networking (SONET) system serving your building
- Backup 48-volt power for telecommunications services in the form of uninterruptible power system (UPS) or batteries

## Do You Still Do Those "Special Things" to Nurture Your Relationship?

Remember when your relationship was new? You never overlooked the details and took great pleasure in doing the little things to ensure a happy relationship. Those little things still matter to you "significant components." Add 10 points for each of the following:

- You lovingly safeguard your servers in secure equipment rooms
- You faithfully store backup data offsite
- You nurture your internal customers through a well-staffed help desk
- You use "protection" when engaged with any significant other. In other words, you defend your systems against nomadic laptop users who might compromise system security or introduce viruses.

## Bonus Questions

You're probably getting worried about your score so far on this quiz. Let me toss a few easy questions so I don't have to worry about hurting your self-esteem

- Has your company hosted a New Year's party in the last five years where anyone brought a live monkey or other primate? If the answer is yes, deduct 25 points.
- Does your company have an IT disaster recovery program that integrates with the finance department to ensure that technical employees called upon to travel after a disaster can get cash quickly?

Was the primate or monkey discussed above your principal system administrator? If the answer is yes, add back the 25 points you deducted.

- Are all cable risers in your building fire-stopped with an approved material to prevent water or fire from traveling from floor to floor after a mishap? If so, take 25 points
- Do you involve your business units in all recovery-planning efforts to ensure that the systems you're backing up are those that are most critical and revenue-impacting to the business? That's worth 100 points.

## How Strong Is Your Relationship?

Now, the part you've been waiting for: Can you expect your disaster-recovery relationship to last? Add up your points and see.

| Points | Category                         | Description                                                                                                                                                                                    |
|--------|----------------------------------|------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 500+   | The <i>perfect</i> relationship! | You will have a long, blissful, and intimate relationship with your significant components. If "Dear Abby" answered a letter about recovery planning, she would probably refer to you by name. |

|         |                                     |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
|---------|-------------------------------------|---------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 250050C | Working on the perfect relationship | You know your imperfections but are working to improve. You might earn a feature spot on Oprah when she does "Disaster Recovery Planners Who Are Really Trying to Change."                                                                                                                                                                                                            |
| 100025C | Relationship challenged             | Please seek professional help. There are 12-step programs for people like you, but the first step in the healing process is recognition                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| 0010C   | Counseling won't help               | If you're trapped in a destructive relationship with someone who has this skill start seeing other people. Stated another way, have you ever seen the "Three Stooges" short called "A Plumbing We Will Go?" This person probably believes that Curly had the right idea for getting water out of a room by drilling holes in the floor. If you happen to work for this person MAYDAY! |

I hope you've had as much fun reading this article as I did writing it. The idea is to present a not-too-subtle way of getting your gears turning again after what I hope was a great holiday for you. I'll be back next month in a more serious vein, but in the meantime please accept my best wishes for a prosperous 2007

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