

# Acronis Empowers BT Ireland with Server Restores in Mere Minutes

Acronis Backup Advanced and Acronis Universal Restore Ensure Servers Stay Online and RTOs Stay Low

## OVERVIEW

BT Ireland has invested millions of pounds in its state-of-the-art data center located deep inside Telephone House in the heart of Belfast. A 25-strong team is responsible for keeping online 24/7 more than 500 servers that offer hosting and disaster recovery services to a wide range of global and local enterprise customers.

Every aspect of the data center had been specifically designed to deliver high levels of resiliency and reliability to BT Ireland's customers. Alan Dowdeswell, Head of Managed Service Operations for BT Ireland, explains: "Our customers might need us to manage anything from a few hundred gigabytes to hundreds of terabytes, but regardless of data volumes, they all look to us for reassurance and dependability. The data center was designed to be a world-class facility with world-class standards of security and reliability."

Although the data center enjoyed the best systems in terms of security, power supplies, and reliability, Dowdeswell had identified a potential improvement – in the time it took to recover a customer's failed server.

The data center was hosting hundreds of servers, many of which had been supplied by BT Ireland's customers and were jointly managed. Although these servers were connected to resilient networks and highly reliable power supplies, there were so many servers being managed that, statistically, a server failure was always a potential customer issue.

## ORGANIZATION

BT Ireland

## SECTOR

Telecommunications Datacenter

## KEY CHALLENGES

Cut data center recovery times from hours, to minutes

## ENVIRONMENT

500 servers running a variety of operating systems and applications

## SOLUTION

- Acronis Backup Advanced for Windows Server
- Acronis Universal Restore

## BUSINESS BENEFITS:

- Servers can now be restored in a matter of minutes
- BT was able to reduce the risk by delivering proactive, real time, pre-agreed service levels to its customers, creating the opportunity to further enhance a high quality service

In fact, in Dowdeswell's experience at least one server might typically fail in any given month due to a variety of reasons and the process for recovering a failed server was often slow and complicated. It could easily take a couple of hours to manually reinstall the operating system, applications, agents, and other configurations specific to that server. As part of providing a quality service, BT would usually offer to support the customer in providing a fix to these issues as quickly as possible.

For many customers using the data center, unscheduled downtime due to IT failure, however brief, can have a direct and expensive impact on their business. The impact of a failed server on a customer's business may not be relegated to the single server. If a customer had multiple servers that relied in any way on the failed server then the impact could spread wider, in some cases bringing their business to a complete stand-still. Dowdeswell explained: "The most reliable power supply, cooling systems, and security cannot protect a customer system when it is affected in this way."

#### **OBJECTIVE: SPEED OF RECOVERY**

BT Ireland wanted a solution that would not just back up the server but, more importantly, would be capable of restoring it from the ground up as fast as possible. Speed of recovery would be the main business driver for the new purchase, and the BT Ireland team set about evaluating the backup and recovery options on the market.

Although they initially evaluated solutions from the traditional software vendors, including Computer Associates and Symantec, BT Ireland selected Acronis

for two reasons: Acronis offered the most complete bare metal restore (BMR) functionality and also delivered the fastest server recovery times. BT Ireland purchased 500 licenses of Acronis Backup Advanced for Windows Server that were installed on all existing, and later any new, servers in the data center.

*"Acronis has enabled us to deliver 'restore on demand' to our customers and make it easier and simpler for us to meet the service level agreements by which our customers judge us"*

**Alan Dowdeswell, Head of Managed Service Operations**

As a first step, an image of each server would be saved to the Acronis Secure Zone (ASZ), a special, hidden partition on the servers' hard drive that is inaccessible to normal applications as well as viruses or spyware. ASZ is used to store disk and partition images and lets the IT team restore images quickly and easily should the server become corrupted and fail to boot. To ensure that the protected server image is kept up to date, BT Ireland configured Acronis Backup Advanced for Windows Server to run scheduled image backups to the hidden partition on a regular basis.

As a second step, another copy of the server image was then saved over the network to a central backup server. In this way, every server in the data center was backed up twice. If there is ever a problem with a server, Dowdeswell's team can immediately pull an up-to-date copy of the server's operating system and applications from the ASZ and, in a couple of key strokes, restore the server in a matter of minutes. Less frequently, a server might experience a catastrophic failure and the drive or entire server would then need to be replaced. In such an instance, the team simply conducts a BMR with the Acronis software to a new drive or server using the image originally saved to the central server. Again, this process can take just a few minutes for the server to be back online.

## PROTECTION AGAINST HARDWARE FAILURE

In addition to the rapid recovery time, using Acronis Universal Restore, a complementary piece of software included with Acronis Backup Advanced for Windows Server, the IT team is able to perform a complete system restore to an entirely new system with different hardware, or to a virtual machine. This means that BT Ireland is not tied in to any server vendor and can simply recover failed servers to the most suitable and available spare hardware of their choice.

## CONCLUSION

Prior to purchasing Acronis Backup for Windows Server including Acronis Universal Restore, the process rebuilding a server was complex and time-consuming. With Acronis, the process has been whittled down to a few clicks of a mouse and can mostly be managed from a central workstation without the need to even go and check the failed server. Because everything is handled

at the image level, members of the IT team no longer need to be experts on the type of server or application they're recovering. Dowdeswell concludes: "It's fast, it's reliable, and it's easy to use".

## ABOUT ACRONIS

Acronis sets the standard for [cyber protection](#) and [hybrid cloud storage](#) through its innovative [backup](#), [anti-ransomware](#), [disaster recovery](#), [storage](#), and [enterprise file sync and share solutions](#). Enhanced by [AI-based Active Protection technology](#), [blockchain-based authentication](#) and a unique [hybrid-cloud architecture](#), Acronis protects all data in any environment, including physical, virtual, cloud, mobile workloads and applications.

[Founded in Singapore in 2003](#), today the company is trusted by more than 5 million consumers and 500,000 businesses worldwide, including [79 of the top 100 most valuable brands](#).