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Introduction

You’ve probably been hearing a lot about the technology “megatrends” of virtualization, cloud computing and mobility. They’re everywhere in technology news today. You may have the perception that the huge enterprises are going to be leading the way in adopting these trends within the workplace. But the truth is that many small and mid-sized businesses (SMBs) are already using these technologies to gain an edge on the competition and keep up with the “big boys” in today’s global market.

Not only do these innovations affect overall business strategy, but they also have an effect on an organization’s preparedness for a disaster that could result in the loss of critical business information. In order to assess to what degree SMBs are adopting these trends, and how their disaster preparedness is affected, Symantec created the Disaster Preparedness Survey.
Methodology

Symantec commissioned ReRez Research to conduct the Disaster Preparedness Survey among SMBs in February and March of 2012. They contacted business and IT executives at 2,053 SMBs (with between five and 250 employees) in 30 countries.

The survey has a reliability of 95 percent with +/- 2.2 percent margin of error.
Does Virtualization, Cloud & Mobility Better Prepare You for Disasters?

Source: Disaster Preparedness Topical Survey
Global Results—February–March 2012
Finding 1

Virtualization, cloud and mobility gaining SMB traction

While the perception might be that SMBs are hesitant to adopt new technologies, the reality is that a growing number of smaller companies are moving ahead with implementations.

For example, when asked about the status of their involvement with the megatrend technologies, 35 percent of the survey respondents said they are using mobile devices to access business information, and 34 percent are implementing or have already deployed server virtualization. Even more (43 percent) are implementing or using private clouds, and 40 percent are even deploying or using public cloud services.

A desire to improve business efficiency and agility would undoubtedly play a large part in the decision to adopt these technologies, but let’s see if disaster preparedness had anything to do with it.

“We utilize the smartphones and the tablets, so any time any of us make a procedure appt or office meeting, we insert it into our iPhones, it’s uploaded to the cloud and it’s sent out... We’re always connected all the time. It’s been really beneficial to our practice in keeping our doctors on schedule and task.”

Practice manager, cardiology practice
What is the status of your involvement with each of the following technologies? (Implementing or already implemented)

- Mobility: 35%
- Server virtualization: 34%
- Private cloud: 43%
- Public cloud: 40%
Finding 2

Effect of disaster preparedness top of mind for SMBs

When considering whether to invest in these technologies, many of the SMBs said they looked at the effect these initiatives would have on their disaster preparedness plans. Thirty-four percent of the executives said disaster preparedness had a moderate to large effect on their decisions about server virtualization and public clouds, 37 percent said it affected their decision on private clouds and 36 percent said it played a role for mobility.

That’s good news, because SMBs have a reputation for being less than diligent about things like data protection and preparing for events that might affect their ongoing business operations. The next question, then, is whether these moves had the desired effect on their ability to protect business information.

“When I was virtualizing the environment here, one of the selling points for management was recovery time. A virtualized environment would be much faster to get back up than a physical one. That sold them on virtualization.”

Owner, property management company

SMBs considered effect on disaster preparedness before proceeding...

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Technology</th>
<th>Percent</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Private Cloud</td>
<td>37%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mobile</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Public Cloud</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Virtualization</td>
<td>34%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Q63: How did concerns about and objectives for disaster preparedness affect your decision to participate or not participate in the following types of computing initiatives? (Moderate/Very large effect)

- Public cloud computing: 34%
- Server virtualization: 34%
- Use of mobile devices to access business information: 36%
- Private cloud computing: 37%
Finding 3

*Early adopters enjoying better disaster preparedness*

The most interesting of all the survey results was that the SMBs that have moved forward with mobile, virtualization and cloud technologies are finding that these technologies have indeed increased their disaster preparedness.

Of those companies that are using server virtualization, for instance, 71 percent report improved disaster preparedness because of that deployment. Forty-three percent of those using private clouds, 41 percent using public cloud services and 36 percent using mobility said those technologies have increased their preparedness.

When you think about it, this makes sense. Server virtualization can provide a level of flexibility that lets companies easily move their computing capacity when a disaster strikes a main data center facility. One of the selling points of virtualization, in fact, is its ability to provide better disaster recovery solutions for organizations.

As for public and private clouds and disaster planning, who’s better at protecting data: the IT manager at a 15-person graphics design firm, or giant cloud providers such as Amazon and Microsoft? And who would be in better shape after a major flood, a company that equips its employees with smartphones to access data via the cloud, or one that has workers relying on PCs that are hooked up to server in a basement under six feet of water?

“We’ve got our system set up with a circuit connecting both sites. Everything’s virtual so we’ve got two networks running simultaneously. So if one would happen to go down, if we did have a disaster, everything would automatically pop up in our other location. It would be a matter of a few minutes.”

*IT manager, research development engineering firm*

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**Percent of SMBs who saw their disaster preparedness improve**

- **Virtualization**: 71%
- **Private Cloud**: 43%
- **Public Cloud**: 41%
- **Mobile**: 36%
How has your engagement with each of the following affected your overall disaster preparedness? (Somewhat/Significantly increased preparedness)

- Server virtualization: 71%
- Private cloud: 43%
- Public cloud: 41%
- Mobility: 36%
Symantec Recommendations

The lesson here for SMBs is that if they’re afraid to move ahead with plans to use the cloud, virtualization or mobile devices because of their potential negative impact on information security or business continuity, these fears are unnecessary.

In order for SMBs to be able to effectively take advantage of the benefits offered by these megatrends, Symantec has developed the following recommendations:

- **Start planning now.** Develop a disaster preparedness plan today. Evaluate how strategic technologies such as mobile, virtualization and cloud can help in those efforts.

- **Implement strategic technologies.** Adopt integrated cloud for offsite storage, and automated conversion to virtual so you have standby machines ready to use in case of failure.

- **Protect your information completely.** Use appropriate security and backup solutions. You may even opt to backup to the cloud.

- **Review and test your disaster preparedness.** This should be completed at least once a quarter.

Given that many SMBs are facing extreme competitive pressures and have limited day-to-day resources, creating a disaster preparedness plan might not be at the top of the priority list. But it should be. Events over the past year or so have shown the kind of impact natural disasters can have on business continuity.

Fortunately for SMBs, the IT megatrends of virtualization, cloud computing and mobility not only provide a means of improving current business processes and increasing efficiency, but can serve as key components of a disaster preparedness strategy.