



SUCCESS STORY

Data Protection is Plain Sailing with Datto

datto | ITWORX

When your business operates in one of the world's harshest environments, you want as much protection as possible. A company demands a robust Business Continuity and Disaster recovery solution that is effective and responsive in these challenging conditions.

Toughest Job in IT

The Craig Group operate the largest British wholly owned fleet engaged in the UK offshore industry, providing shipping and energy services worldwide. The IT Department might have one of the toughest jobs in IT; a team of six are responsible for keeping 31 vessels, 8 offices and over 1000 people both on and offshore working and connected. Between them, they use over thirty apps across 80 servers. Communication across land and sea is possible thanks to a complex network - and downtime can be both expensive and dangerous. The job of the Craig Group IT team is to "ensure that the company can always function, even in the event of an IT systems failure."

A Data Lifejacket

Although Craig Group had a business continuity and disaster recovery strategy in place, the traditional tape method of backup wasn't working for their business any longer. Like many companies, Craig Group were using a mix of vendors to fulfil their backup needs, which did not provide the solution they were looking for.

Onshore, at 8 offices located worldwide, tape backup could only be taken once a day meaning Craig Group could potentially lose a whole day's data in the event of an IT systems failure.

In addition, Craig Group operate 31 vessels predominantly in the North Sea. These vessels are a mix of platform supply and emergency response and rescue vessels (ERRVs), providing essential support to oil and gas assets in the region. Each ship employs between 12 and 15 crew members and all ERRVs are at sea for 28 days at a time. On board, they rely on a server to run maintenance databases, email & print services. These are backed up to an external hard drive, which previously had to be loaded to tape when the vessel landed ashore at the end of a trip.

This meant that when an offshore server failed, a ship would be reduced to functioning on just laptops. Additionally, it was difficult for the onshore team to know this had occurred. Checking in to a fleet of 31 ships in the North Sea is complex and time-consuming.

As a result, Craig Group were seeking an upgrade. The vision was one simplified solution, a 'single pane of glass' that could manage the Group's backup environment at both on and offshore locations. It wasn't until ITWORX – Scotland's Elite Datto Partner - met with the IT Department that an 'elegant solution' came into focus. ITWORX understood the vision of the client and demonstrated that the Datto product range could meet the diverse demands of the Group.

ITWORX is headquartered in Aberdeen and specialises in Cloud and streaming technologies, improving reliability and reducing operating costs. ITWORX understand the Oil & Gas business and the unique challenges it faces: multiple on and offshore locations, which are often remote, time out at sea and the desire to simplify and create centralised dashboards.



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ITWORX and Craig Group ran extensive tests to demonstrate the Datto was fit for purpose. Trials established that with Datto, backups could be taken every three hours, which would lower Craig Groups' RPO (Recovery Point Objective) and improve total resilience.

As Craig Group operate internationally from different locations, email is the primary business conduit. Speed of response for communicating with a ship or tendering and quoting contract renewals can be crucial to the triumph of the business and values can be in millions - downtime could be very significant. Customers always have the choice to approach competitors. Ensuring systems are efficient and protected is an important strategy in the continued success across the Group's activities.

A New Horizon

Although server failures can still be problematic, the new Datto technology SIRIS 3, has significantly improved overall resilience, method of operation and recovery of data. Almost immediately after putting their first Datto on to one of their ships, there was a server failure one week into a 28-day trip. The vessel was off the coast of Africa and inaccessible. Previously, this server issue would have been hard to manage; with Datto, Craig Group could run off a virtualisation for 3 weeks.

Failures are not just exclusive to harsh weather and working conditions. An incumbent cloud provider to the land-based HQ experienced service provision issues. While Datto was not the contracted solution for this on-shore facility, Datto had become the operational benchmark expected of the IT Department. Waiting hours for little sign of any recovery was unacceptable, and so Datto recovery was invoked. One hour later, HQ was back to running as normal.

Confident of the recovery process across the fleet and the group, the IT Department are proud to have designed an efficient, elegant, single-pane-of-glass solution that affords total management of 40 devices, and at a greatly reduced administration cost.

The significant difference is that a 'prevention not cure' culture endures. Although less administration time is spent on a scheduled failover rotation, the Craig Group can ensure that each of the 40 SIRIS 3 devices are tested regularly (on 'Failover Fridays'). A full virtual image is spun up from the Cloud to ensure everything is still running as normal.

Bruce Catto, IT Manager at Craig Group, commented: "We always look at Datto as an enterprise product with an SMB price model. The solution provides our business, including our mix of locations both on and offshore, with an effective and efficient solution. You can trust it to do what it needs to do".



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