



Microsoft SQL Server Customer Solution Case Study



Customer: ServiceU, part of the Active Network, Inc.

Web Site: www.serviceu.com

Customer Size: 35 employees

Country or Region: United States

Industry: Professional services—IT services

Customer Profile

Based in Memphis, Tennessee, ServiceU provides online applications that help schools, churches, and other organizations manage events.

Solution Spotlight

- Saves 20 minutes per year of downtime, so customers can offer better service to end users.
- Boosts availability to nearly 99.995 percent.
- Makes IT administration less complex.
- Boosts productivity and helps deliver new features to customers faster.

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Online Company Reduces Downtime and Helps Its Customers to Improve Service

"The SQL Server 2012 online indexing capabilities alone save us up to 20 minutes a year in downtime, or 38.5 percent of allowable downtime. That might not sound like much, but it is huge for us and our customers."

David Smith, Director, Software Architecture, ServiceU

ServiceU, part of the Active Network, Inc. ([NYSE: ACTV](http://NYSE:ACTV)), needed to increase availability for its mission-critical online event management applications. The company implemented a new Microsoft high-availability and disaster recovery solution, which reduces downtime and gives customers more confidence in the availability of the applications. Also, the company has cut failover time between nodes by half, made IT administration simpler, and expects to reduce development costs.

Business Needs

ServiceU provides web-based online scheduling, event management, payment processing, and other services to customers in 15 countries. The company's primary software as a service (SaaS) applications are used by a growing number of universities, churches, theaters, and other organizations to manage conferences and other events, and to handle payment processing.

It is essential that these applications are available around the clock. "If we're not available, we can literally be out of business," says David Smith, Director of

Software Architecture, ServiceU. "One hundred percent of our revenue is generated by these applications, so if we have many outages, we will lose customers, and therefore our revenue."

Previously, ServiceU provided high availability and disaster recovery by using database mirroring in Microsoft SQL Server 2008 Enterprise data management software, between its primary facility in Memphis, Tennessee, and a disaster recovery site in Atlanta, Georgia. The company sought to increase availability even more, to improve on the 52 minutes that is the maximum allowable total for



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planned and unplanned downtime under its service level agreement.

One of the reasons maintaining high availability was sometimes challenging was the time it took to do re-indexing in the previous environment. "We could do online indexing of most indexes using SQL Server 2008, but not all," says Smith. "Any time we needed to rebuild an index with line-of-business data, it caused downtime and the clock started ticking on the 52 minutes."

In early 2010, ServiceU decided to seek a new solution that could improve availability.

Solution

Ultimately, ServiceU chose to upgrade to [Microsoft SQL Server 2012 Enterprise](#). "The decision was an easy one," says Smith. "We have used SQL Server to support our mission-critical applications for many years, and Microsoft has always been very responsive to our needs." ServiceU was mostly interested in [SQL Server 2012 AlwaysOn](#), a set of features that gives customers the opportunity to query data in replicas and perform backup operations from the replicas.

In October 2011, the firm implemented SQL Server 2012 Enterprise, on Dell PowerEdge R815 server computers that were upgraded to run on the Windows Server 2008 R2 Enterprise operating system. The company supports an AlwaysOn availability group, which manages 31 primary and secondary databases, together containing 1 terabyte of data. The firm also created a disaster recovery replica at its Atlanta facility as part of the availability group. There are now SQL Server failover cluster instances for local high availability and a single Windows Server failover cluster between the sites.

The organization's database administrators are using SQL Server 2012 features such as [FileTable](#), which eases storage and management of unstructured data while making it accessible through the file system. Administrators are also using the indirect

checkpoints feature, which offers recovery times that are shorter and more predictable. SQL Server 2012 also offers enhanced online indexing, with which nearly 100 percent of indexes can be rebuilt online. This helps users avoid costly downtime associated with index rebuilds.

The implementation was simple and smooth. "Because of our meticulous planning and testing, we completed the upgrade with a total application downtime of only 3 minutes and 52 seconds, including testing," says Smith.

Benefits

With SQL Server 2012, ServiceU has increased availability and disaster recovery, increasing customer confidence. ServiceU has also reduced failover time, eased administration, and expects to lower costs.

Gives Customers High Availability and Helps Improve Their Service

With SQL Server 2012 AlwaysOn, ServiceU has a high-availability and disaster recovery solution that can increase availability for the company's tier-one, mission-critical applications to nearly 99.995 percent. "Our entire business is now based on SQL Server 2012, and we have the high availability we need," says Smith. "The SQL Server 2012 online indexing capabilities alone save us up to 20 minutes a year in downtime, or 38.5 percent of allowable downtime. That might not sound like much, but it is huge for us and our customers."

As a result, ServiceU customers can offer improved service. "That's the key," says Smith. "Our customers can provide better service to their users, and their events can be managed more successfully. That will

bring us more business."

Cuts Failover Time by Half

ServiceU also expects to reduce failover time. "Using the indirect checkpoints feature in SQL Server 2012, failover between nodes can take place in as little as half the time it previously took," says Smith. "I can do planned failover seamlessly, with less downtime."

Eases IT Administration

IT administration is also less complex for the company. "Using the FileTable feature in SQL Server 2012, we can take local unstructured data and make it a part of an availability group so it resides in multiple locations," says Smith. "I can simply write queries to manage the files that are there."

Increases Productivity Through Lower Development Costs

Taking advantage of new development features in SQL Server 2012, developers at ServiceU will have programmability enhancements that can help them be more productive, leading to cost savings for the company. "We expect to get 15 percent more time out of our database administrators as it relates to SQL Server," says Smith. "They will do more work using fewer resources, so we will see some hard cost savings from implementing SQL Server 2012."

ServiceU also plans to use new spatial data enhancements in SQL Server 2012 to improve the company's competitive advantage. Using these features, ServiceU expects to bring new functionality and features to its customers months faster than it could before.

Software and Services

- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
 - Microsoft SQL Server 2012 Enterprise
 - Windows Server 2008 R2 Enterprise

Hardware

- Dell PowerEdge R815 server computers