Why cloud data protection is a top priority for businesses post-pandemic

By Gerhard Fourie   8 Feb 2021

The pandemic greatly accelerated the adoption of cloud technologies around the world, particularly in South Africa. The effectiveness of cloud data protection to enable disaster recovery and facilitate business continuity is more important now than ever.

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Where many businesses may have been lagging behind when it came to adopting cloud-based solutions, being forced to lock down and enable a remote workforce was the final push they needed. However, in a digital world, data becomes arguably a business' most valuable asset.

Without data, a digital business does not exist

With digital transformation efforts fast-tracked, and the flexibility, scalability and availability of the cloud making it the ideal solution to many pandemic challenges, the shift to the cloud and software-as-a-service happened quickly in 2020. This means that protecting data in the cloud has become a critical business priority. As the year went on, this became increasingly clear.

A Commvault cloud data protection customer survey undertaken in 2020 revealed that diaster recovery preparedness is the top data protection priority during and as a result of the global pandemic.

Initial survey results in May had 80% of businesses listing this as their most important consideration. As the situation became protracted, this number increased to 89% when the survey was repeated in October.

The pandemic has revealed the importance of diaster recovery and the need for businesses to recover data fast from any location, whether users are working from home, from an office or anywhere in between.

Data and workloads need to be restored quickly to ensure businesses remain up and running in an 'always on' digital world.

Held to ransom

Another thing that became more evident over the course of 2020 is the need to effectively protect businesses from ransomware. While initially this was listed as a priority by only 61% of businesses, 83% identified preventing ransomware as a top concern by October 2020.

The reality is that the shift toward a remote workforce and the speed at which cloud solutions were adopted exposed business systems more than ever. This created new vulnerabilities for cybercriminals to exploit, as evidenced by the multitude of high profile, highly publicised attacks that occurred over the course of the year.

Ransomware is a constantly evolving threat that can do significant harm to businesses in the event of a successful exploit. Ransomware prevention should be a top priority and should form a central component of data management, whether their data is stored in the cloud, on-premises or in a hybrid environment.

Encrypted backups, alerting and rapid data recovery are critical to effectively dealing with ransomware attacks.

Digital transformation and the cloud

Faster digital transformation and increased cloud adoption were also listed as priorities for business as a result of Covid-19. In May 2020, 49% of businesses surveyed responded that this was a concern, and in October 2020 the number was still high at 47%.

The rapid move to work from anywhere shifted technology priorities to enabling productivity while ensuring security, including protecting virtual machines, cloud-based applications and all data sets.

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The migration into the cloud gained traction over the course of the year. By October, 34% of survey respondents indicated that their cloud migrations had accelerated due to the pandemic, compared to 29% in May 2020.

Cloud-based solutions and workloads have been a crucial enabler over the course of the past year, enabling organisations to transform quickly and delivering the agility and flexibility they needed to survive.

Surviving and thriving in a digital world

There is no doubt that cloud and hybrid scenarios are enablers for success now and in the future. However, while cloud vendors offer high availability, enterprise backup and recovery remain the responsibility of the business.

Cloud-based workloads need to be protected with effective third-party solutions that manage backups, enable rapid recovery and provide a single pane of glass view overall data, wherever it is located. The ability to streamline, scale and protect data at speed is key to surviving and thriving in the post-pandemic digital world.

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