



The Buck Stops Here

By Brandon Tanner



There's an ad in this quarter's Issues & Answers that asks the question 'How long can you hold your breath?' It gets nervous chuckles from WBA bankers for two good reasons; chuckles because it's humorous—nervous chuckles because it's true.

The bottom-line message is that if your bank's computer technology goes down and your associated data and banking and business applications are unavailable for hours or even days, your hard earned customer relationships are at serious risk.

The fact is we're living in a time of warp-speed connectedness; even we Boomers and Xers who've been around the block a time or two have high online expectations. Now imagine how high those expectations are going to

be for the coming iGeneration of customers (and business managers) using smartphones and tablets and laptops to check balances, transfer funds, pay bills and more. Bankers now and in the future must safeguard data and functionality regardless of what man or nature throws at them.

The irony is this is not a technology question. It has nothing to do with tactical technology jargon like scalability and flexibility, or with philosophies related to whether backup and recovery occur onsite or at a sanitized facility

with multiple bandwidth providers for data and communications. It doesn't concern virtual server protection or server and application failover or the active state of the host. It is not a black box.

It's a 'buck stops here' business question, a question you, as an executive manager of the bank, are fully equipped by experience with customers to answer without consulting IT staff or third party specialists. The question is this:

How long will an individual or business bank customer tolerate my bank's inability to deliver real-time account information and access?

What's your guess? Is it one hour? Two hours? Five hours? Whatever length of time it is, after it expires, how long will customer loyalty remain undamaged? Everyone knows it's a heck of a lot less expensive to keep an existing customer than it is to win a new one. Existing customers are the bank's bread and butter. The best practice is to not erode their confidence.

So you know the number. Now ask your IT leader or your responsible, knowledgeable third party provider if it's possible to meet your time objective. If it isn't, the issue does not then become 'Well, how long will it take?' because your number should not be negotiable. You know the customer. You know the expectation. You know the consequences. The buck stops with you.

You have a responsibility to be prepared to execute the fastest possible recovery from man- or nature-caused disaster, and facilitate the continuation of normal business activities for the good of your customers.

For more information business continuation, contact Brandon Tanner, IT-Lifeline Vice President of Sales and Marketing toll free at 1-866-394-0101, or BTanner@itlifeline.net. IT-Lifeline's Business Recovery Center provides complete continuity and recovery services across business segments with a full range of IT continuity solutions, ensuring full recovery come what may. 