

CASE STUDY

ABOUT ASCENTIS

Ascentis is a UK-based Awarding Organisation with a portfolio of user-friendly qualifications designed to meet the needs of all learners, from basic literacy and numeracy through to Access to Higher Education and professional teacher training. As a recognised charity, Ascentis is committed to the provision of clear progression routes that enable learners to climb the 'qualifications ladder' and achieve their lifelong aspirations.

Ascentis is based in Lancaster with offices also in Plymouth. Originally established in 1975 as the first "Open College" in the UK, Ascentis has always stayed independent to allow it to respond to the needs of its customers and learners. This flexible approach adopted by Ascentis has resulted in education centres throughout the UK choosing to run their qualifications through Ascentis.



THE CHALLENGE

Ascentis, with offices just outside Lancaster city centre, were unlucky enough to be affected by Storm Desmond during December 2015. The severity of the storm forced Ascentis to invoke their disaster recovery service, despite best efforts to avoid disruption. The provider at the time were unable to successfully recover Ascentis's environment which left the charity without access to IT infrastructure, including critical internal services, for a period of several days.

During the process, the level of support given by the provider was also lacking and left Ascentis unsure of their service. In light of this, the business took the decision to look for a new disaster recovery service provider.

Ascentis had two major goals during their search for a new provider. The priority was to find a provider with thorough testing procedures and high levels of support in order to regain trust in the disaster recovery service and to justify the monthly cost. With Ascentis being a charity, the second major goal was to reduce costs of the solution, if possible without compromising service levels.

A further goal was to find a provider that could keep up with the change in Ascentis's requirements. Over the last few years, Ascentis have made major changes to their environment, including a virtualisation project, full hardware refresh and migration to Microsoft Office 365. Ascentis needed a provider and solution that was able to meet these changes as well as any future changes that may occur over the next few years.



WHY FANTASTIC CLOUD SERVICES?

Fantastic Cloud Services (FCS) proposed to perform a full proof of concept (free of charge) before any formal decision had to be made, so that Ascentis could test the Disaster Recovery service before going ahead. This gave Ascentis the confidence to proceed, safe in the knowledge that they could be assured of FCS' service before making any commitment.

The proof of concept was successfully completed, with a full disaster recovery test performed to FCS' environment. Ascentis were able to test the environment themselves, thus ensuring its reliability and providing reassurance that the service could be trusted whenever it was called upon.

FCS also had to make the cost of the solution as competitive as possible, in order to meet Ascentis' budget. FCS' Disaster Recovery solution, based on a pay-

as-you-use pricing model, was able to lower the costs to Ascentis by charging a low monthly amount. This is a true cloud pricing model, as it allows customers to reflect their costs with what they are using.

FCS' Disaster Recovery solution also met the secondary goal of Ascentis, which was to use a provider capable of adjusting the solution to any change in requirements. Capable of protecting data from physical and virtual servers, as well as public cloud-based data, in this case Microsoft's Office 365, Ascentis did not have to make any compromises in their choice of solution. This meant that Ascentis only had to use one product and service provider to protect all of their critical infrastructure and data, whether it be legacy physical servers, newer virtual machines, or Office 365 based emails and Sharepoint data.

THE BENEFITS

Ascentis and FCS have now planned, implemented and successfully tested a Disaster Recover solution capable of meeting their recovery objectives. This provides reassurance that should another natural disaster hit the region (as rare as they may be), Ascentis will be prepared and better able to deal with the consequences.

As well as protecting against natural disasters, which can cause downtime to an entire office, Ascentis are also protected against more common causes of disaster recovery. Human error, hardware or software failure, malware, ransomware and viruses are all far more likely to occur, but won't necessarily have the same immediately catastrophic effects on the business as a natural disaster. They will, however, cause disruption, frustration, and reduced execution of Ascentis' services, which in turn can lead to poor customer satisfaction and potential harm to the business. These causes, despite not being as large in scale, are much more likely to occur and if not dealt with properly, can have wide-ranging effects. Ransomware, such as the Cryptolocker Trojan, can quickly and subtly effect an entire network

of machines and data if not dealt with quickly. Using FCS' Disaster Recovery solution however, Ascentis have the ability to restore earlier versions of their files, or even entire machines, to a time before malware infiltrated their environment.

With regards to the future, as Ascentis move forward and further develop their environment they need a disaster recovery solution that can be with them every step of the way. Disaster recovery in general has become more of a hot topic in recent years, and will continue to be a major consideration in any IT manager's future plans. As more and more businesses begin to deem downtime as unacceptable, terms like Recovery Time Objectives (RTOs) and Recovery Point Objectives (RPOs) will become better known.

Asigra, has always been a product that keeps pace with the industry's changes. In recent years it became one of the first products to backup Microsoft Office 365, and is already capable of backing up container technologies such as Docker.



See how our **Hybrid Cloud Backup** and **Disaster Recovery services** could help you improve your redundancy visit our website at

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