

Extract from Jim Lee's 'midrange matters' column in iSeries365 and iSeries News UK

COLUMN: Midrange Matters with Jim Lee: CLASSIFIED BOGS

In recent months, I have been involved with clients in business continuity planning. At boardroom level, this planning tends to focus on considerations that are people-related. Where will key staff go? How will they get there? What will they need for the business to keep going? This is important, for executives understand that people, phones, faxes, email and the ability to print business forms are critical components of deliverable business.

Of course, the infrastructure is important. Servers, routers, firewalls, switches and the related communications links are all needed to deliver and process the business information. But non-IT executives expect the technology to be relatively easily duplicated or replicated. These executives' presumptions should be correct. They are not.

With so many interrelated factors, there are many tiered, technical justifications for the complexity of delivering equivalent infrastructure and for bringing up servers with current data. A few of these factors are consistent notwithstanding the size of the organisation. But the available solution strategies are not consistent.

The solution strategy that is required is broadly determined by the technology culture of the organisation. The technology culture is capable of classification. A useful acronym for the four classifications that I identify is BOGS – ie: Big, Open, Gates, Soltis.

If you don't know who Soltis is then you may substitute Smart for the "S". If you don't know who Gates is, well, you need to get out more.

There is little that is worthy of note in the culture that I classify as Big. Enterprise-level, mainframe-using businesses will, almost invariably, have recognised the needs



for resilience and failover. Duplication is delivered. The presumption is fulfilled. Risk assessment justifies the budget

The Open culture classification is a complete hoot. This is the current incarnation of the “Scalable, Portable, Flexible, Accessible” genre of the late 1980s and early 1990s. Equivalencing infrastructure for this classification involves a mixture of software, middleware and current technology hardware. Incompatibilities abound. What works for one is useless for another. Replication at the fibre switch level of a storage area network (SAN) is often adopted as a means of avoiding a series of licences on a range of servers. Much as the protagonists of this school have fought Microsoft all along, the corporate email is, however, all too often Microsoft, so more licenses and more components need to be resolved.

My third culture class is Gates. Yes indeed, the world’s richest man and leading benefactor – to all but customers. This classification involves sites with Microsoft operating systems, middleware, applications and tools. Commonly, one finds separate Intel servers for the purposes. The audit can be onerous. Connectivity can take some research. Administration is dependent on “administrators” who are conceptually correct but often a practical nightmare. “Active Directory” problems are waning but “patching in” the NT stuff from the corner has its problems.

Very, very few sites in this culture have achieved a restore from tape or other removable media. The students in this school do have backup media. But restore is difficult to test, so all too often they don’t. When data restore has been tested, a false comfort is engendered. When we come to try server rebuild, it is not uncommon to find data restore as having been tested, but not rebuild. Rebuild/reload sequencing is sometimes almost unachievable.

The Soltis/Smart classification? Well, you are spoiled for choice. Almost too many options are available from the replication tools world. Restore from removable media is flawed only by object ownership and name sequence issues that are easily resolved or avoided. Even hardware considerations have IBM’s support with High Availability Server discounts. Software revisioning and compatibility considerations are reinforced by unsurpassed backward compatibility. Disaster Recovery; High



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Availability; Business Continuity (Technology) plans are a matter of routine. Testing restores and rebuilds can reveal issues, but these are normally trivial. In effect, the criterion becomes cost. The delivery of equivalence in this classification is possibly easier than for the Bigs but the cost is a constraint for smaller enterprises. The “Can do” fall back is, however, another plus to the iSeries customer community.

If you are on the edge of the BOGS, you have probably realised that you are not exclusively in one classification. Nobody is. But you may need to Open some Gates, if you get my drift.

If you haven't already started a business continuity plan, then start one. The process is iterative. Each step forward will prove a giant leap in the event of an emergency. And, don't despair if you are not classified Soltis. You could be soon. It is surprising what you can put in a partition or run on an IXS when needs must.

Ends.