

Reach Plc Keeps the News on 24/7 with AWS Marketplace

Reach moved its disaster recovery solution to the AWS Cloud using NetApp Cloud Volumes ONTAP from AWS Marketplace, achieving greater reliability at lower cost. Reach is the largest newspaper publisher in the UK and has more than 70 websites serving over 110 million unique visitors per month. For disaster recovery, the company uses Amazon S3 and Amazon EBS for storage and AWS CloudFormation for reliable, repeatable, automated provisioning.

Digital Media Is an Always-On Business

Thriving in the journalism industry has become increasingly challenging in recent years with the explosion in online information sources. Satisfying today's information-hungry audiences means keeping digital platforms constantly up to date while continuing to serve the print market as efficiently as possible.

[Reach](#) is the largest newspaper publisher in the United Kingdom, with their well-known *Daily Mirror* just one of more than 70 websites and 150 print titles. Over the past several years, it has moved its web platform to the Amazon Web Services (AWS) Cloud to increase scalability, reduce costs, and ensure that customers can always access the news they need. For example, the 2016 US presidential election required the company to scale up its infrastructure tenfold in a matter of minutes—something Reach plc was able to handle easily using AWS.

Ensuring Availability in a Hybrid World

Some of the company's print titles are published multiple times a day, and to maximize press productivity, it performs extensive contract printing work for other companies. All these activities are highly time-sensitive. "If IT services go down, it could cause missed deadlines or, worse still, failure to publish an edition—something that has never happened in the company's history," says Peter Raettig, head of technical operations at Reach. "Such an event could drive away readers and the advertisers who seek them."

While its digital experiences are all on AWS, the company uses a hybrid approach to IT overall. Its ad management, analytics, editorial, and printing applications are hosted in an on-premises data center. It partnered with [NetApp](#) to gain the scalable storage capabilities it required to consolidate all these functions into a single location, achieving significant cost savings through technologies such as deduplication and snapshots.

This approach is cost-efficient, but it makes disaster recovery (DR) a business-critical function for Reach. The company needs to know that if its data center goes down, photographers, writers, editors, and printing professionals can still get to the tools they need to keep the business going.

Previously, the company replicated services and data in a DR facility hosted in its London headquarters—a pricey proposition, given that it is some of the most expensive real estate in the world. When the lease was up on the DR floor, Raettig saw another opportunity to take advantage of the AWS Cloud. "In addition to eliminating an entire floor's worth of costly space, moving DR to AWS enabled us to further reduce our infrastructure spend," he says.

Achieved recovery point objective 50 minutes less than target.

Reach

Company: Reach
Industry: Media and Entertainment
Country: United Kingdom
Employees: 5,000
Website: <http://www.reachplc.com/>

About Reach

Reach is the largest national and regional news publisher in the UK and includes brands such as the Daily Mirror, Daily Express, Sunday People, Daily Record, Daily Star, OK!, and regional titles including the Manchester Evening News, Liverpool Echo, Birmingham Mail, and Bristol Post. It sold more than 540 million newspapers in 2017 and has a network of more than 70 websites viewed by 110 million unique browsers each month.

Benefits

- Eliminated DR data center
- Cut storage costs by 50%
- Achieved 10-minute recovery point objective
- Automated failover
- Minimized cloud infrastructure requirements

AWS Services Used

- [AWS Marketplace](#)
- [AWS CloudFormation](#)
- [Amazon Elastic Cloud Compute \(Amazon EC2\)](#)
- [Amazon Elastic Block Storage \(Amazon EBS\)](#)
- [Amazon Simple Storage Service \(Amazon S3\)](#)

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Peter Raettig, Head of Technical Operations,
Reach plc

All the Data That's Fit to Store

Initially, Reach crafted its own DR approach in AWS, but found it difficult to achieve the performance and cost savings it sought. To ensure its cloud-based DR solution would provide rigorous reliability at an acceptable cost, Reach consulted NetApp. After in-depth evaluation, Reach selected [NetApp Cloud Volumes ONTAP](#), which it procured from [AWS Marketplace](#). The solution uses a combination of [Amazon Elastic Block Storage](#) (Amazon EBS) and [Amazon Simple Storage Service \(Amazon S3\)](#), along with [Amazon Elastic Compute Cloud](#) (Amazon EC2).

“Cloud Volumes ONTAP from AWS Marketplace provides us with the high performance and rich functionality we have come to expect from the NetApp solutions we use in our data center,” says Raettig. “Our recovery time and recovery point objectives are 60 minutes. Using NetApp Cloud Volumes ONTAP from AWS Marketplace, we have achieved recovery times in testing that are almost instantaneous, and with as little as 10 minutes of data loss.”

The company also needs to know that it can keep running in its DR environment for as long as needed to recover from a disaster. With Cloud Volumes ONTAP, the Reach IT team can ensure the business that it would have the same performance and functionality available from the cloud as it does from its on-premises data center. Reach brings the DR site into a production-ready state every six months to reassure regulators and shareholders that it can recover from a disaster successfully.

Keeping Costs in Check

One challenge with traditional DR solutions is the cost of duplicating an existing environment for a scenario that may never occur. Using Cloud Volumes ONTAP from AWS Marketplace and [AWS CloudFormation](#) templates, Reach can use a “pilot-light” approach, which reduces the amount of infrastructure required to provide

DR capability. “We run the minimum necessary for DR in AWS,” says Ian Castleton, system architect at Reach. “If we have to fail over an application or all our applications, we activate the database and data volumes to a particular point in time when the last snapshot was made. All this is scripted in AWS CloudFormation so we can ensure that the process is repeatable and foolproof.”

NetApp has brought its high-performance data management technology to the cloud as well. Using the compression, deduplication, and thin provisioning in Cloud Volumes ONTAP, NetApp has cut AWS storage requirements by 50 percent. Using the lowest-cost Amazon S3 tier, the company has further reduced costs. “Overall, we have achieved much greater cost savings than we initially expected,” says Raettig. “In our business, that means more to invest in the great content that keeps customers coming back.”

About the Partner

NetApp provides a range of hybrid cloud data services that simplify management of applications and data across cloud and on-premises environments to accelerate digital transformation. The company has more than 10,000 employees in 110 global offices, with annual revenue exceeding \$5 billion in 2017.