

What The Amazon EC2 Outage Means To Your Business **by Chris Poindexter**

Users of Reddit and Foursquare knew before the press release there was a great disturbance in the internet force. Their favorite sites were down and down hard. Reddit wasn't back to normal for a day and half. An eternity in internet time.

On March 31, 2011, Gmail users experienced [a similar outage](#) that left many users in near panic being separated from their email and giving them first hand experience of what happens when the cloud goes bad.

Companies depending on cloud services and outsource providers were understandably rattled. If EC2 and Gmail could have outages any service was vulnerable. For many it was the natural reaction to discovering all your eggs are in an unreliable basket.

Don't Panic

The advise on the cover of the Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy is appropriate at times like these. Consider that down time can happen on any system, internal or external. A hungover heavy equipment operator can take out your entire business, or internet access for an entire region, with one thoughtless swipe of a bucket.

A panic overhaul and internalizing services would be a mistake for most organizations. A more practical approach might be considering more than one cloud provider, particularly those that offer demand flexibility. It may be painful to pay for redundancy, but you have to weigh that cost against the possibility of being dead in the water or, worse, losing critical company data.

Backup Everything

When someone else is managing your data, it's easy to leave the details to them. After all, you're busy working your own business.

Trying to duplicate the complexity of a service the size of EC2 would be folly, but a more achievable goal might be to keep current backups of your mission critical data. Hardware and storage are cheap, Linux is free and one thing Linux does extremely well is automation of tasks like backing up large amounts of data.

Keeping your own backups is a good idea for many reasons. Thus far we've been talking about backups as a hedge against service failure, but what happens if one of your outsource providers goes out of business? Who owns your data? That

question might not be as simple as it may seem at first glance. Having your own internal copies frees you from those concerns and keeps an outsource provider from becoming the single point of failure.

You can even backup your [personal and company Gmail](#). Along with the obvious also consider backing up Facebook, Twitter and other personal and company blogs. Think about the time you invested in those online resources and a solid backup plan for your company data becomes a no-brainer.

Chris Poindexter is a 19 year IT veteran and software engineer. Lately he's turned his passion for technology and digital media into a writing career. You can learn more at <http://www.chrispoindexter.com>