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Disaster recovery certification: Must have or nice to have?

By null

Terrorism, tsunamis and hurricanes as well as cyberattacks that shut down systems and halt business operations should be enough to make IT solution providers consider disaster recovery certification courses that teach IT teams the disciplines of backup and disaster recovery planning. However, not every channel partner is convinced that certifications are a must-have for their skilled IT employees.

To prepare for the worst, value-added resellers, systems integrators, cloud providers and [managed service providers](#) should have IT personnel ready and able to develop disaster preparedness plans that will take several factors into consideration:

- What [mission-critical](#) data they'll keep on premises and off premises.
- What technologies they'll use to back up their most important information.
- Determine how they'll resume business operations after a [disruptive event](#) occurs.
- Develop a plan that focuses on several aspects of disaster recovery and [business continuity planning](#) such as defining [recovery time objectives](#) and recovery point objectives for mission critical applications.
- Frequently testing the recovery of critical applications to make sure plans are validated and aligned with recovery time objectives and [recovery point objectives](#).

One organization charged with helping IT professionals plan for unexpected catastrophes is the [Disaster Recovery Institute International](#), which trains and certifies professionals who work with companies to protect systems, recover data and resume business operations in the aftermath of a disaster.

The organization has certified more than 13,000 professionals across the globe and, according to [Chloe Demrovsky](#), DRI's executive director, the institute's methodology is to teach professionals to focus on the effects of the incident of destruction and their ability to help organizations deliver core services or products to market in the face of stress.

"Technology is only one component of that, but it's obviously a very key component especially considering today when we are so reliant on technology to do everything that we do especially in service-related industries," Demrovsky said.

Not surprisingly, research from the Institute shows that most of DRI's certified professionals work in the [financial services industry](#), followed by healthcare and government.

For channel partners that are interested in providing their IT staff with [disaster recovery \(DR\)](#) and business continuity training, DRI has 13 certifications that include multiple aspects of [disaster preparedness](#) planning including its Certified Business Continuity Professional (CBCP) certification, which teaches students skills in business continuity and disaster recovery. The application fee for the [CBCP](#) course is \$400 with an annual renewal fee of \$175.

Other DRI courses specialize in data protection, data retention and other services for particular vertical markets as well as audit and [risk management](#) planning.

DRI offers a number of online classes but Demrovsky said people like to come to the in-person classes because they value the networking component and receive a deeper learning experience.

"We offer courses in the U.S. and in different cities around the world. We also offer corporate training at company sites where we teach courses to a large corporate group all at once," Demrovsky said.

Backup as service gains ground

Two recently released reports suggest that channel partners should explore their options as [small and midsize businesses](#) turn to cloud computing as they build out their backup and disaster recovery strategy:

- Analysts at Technavio, a market research firm headquartered in London, predict the global backup as a service market will expand at a compound annual growth rate of around 27% from 2016 to 2020. [The study](#) noted that there are high upfront costs in infrastructure as well as continuous investments in hardware and networks to support a disaster recovery plan. The expense has caused many SMBs to resist deploying a disaster recovery offering at their data centers, instead, preferring the annual subscription model of backup as a service.
- A report from Zetta, a cloud backup and DR company, found that 37% of SMB IT respondents are using the cloud as part of their disaster recovery approach today, up from 26% last year. Ten percent of respondents said they use only cloud-based offerings for DR, up from just 4% in 2015. Of those respondents [planning to add](#) a new DR method in the next 12 months, nearly 60% said they plan to add a cloud-based option.

Disaster recovery certification: Skepticism

As [channel partners](#) grapple with determining how to best implement a disaster recovery plan, some aren't convinced that DR certification is their top priority.

When asked whether a disaster recovery certification is a necessity, a nice-to-have feature or not important at all -- and whether there is anything specific to backup and disaster recovery that lends itself to the need for certification of staff members -- [Gayle Rose](#), CEO of EVS Corp., a company that [provides turnkey](#) data backup, disaster recovery and storage offerings, had this to say:

"We do not have anyone on our team that is certified in generic disaster recovery. Instead, we certify our engineers on the specific technologies we deploy to create a DR solution," Rose said. "For example, we have VMware certifications, [CCNA \(Cisco Certified Network Associate\)](#) for networking, and software certifications for backup and disaster recovery."

The same question was posed to [Ken Swayze](#), compliance and security analyst for [Peak 10](#), a company that provides IT offerings for data center and network services as well as cloud and managed services.

"It's a nice-to-have feature," Swayze said. "Business continuity and disaster recovery is the core of what we provide to our customers. The certifications are an added bonus and tend to be helpful in the [regulatory compliance](#) auditing process."

Open source company, [Canonical](#), which offers managed services to companies adopting the Ubuntu platform, doesn't have IT team members that have DR certifications said [Joey Stanford](#), the company's [governance risk and compliance](#) program manager. The company uses several techniques to shore up its disaster preparedness strategy including transferring customer's critical data to tape and using orchestration tools for DR planning. Stanford said his company is not convinced that a disaster recovery

certification brings value.

"Why would we want to pay a premium for one of our IT employees to be certified when the technology that we are using is very well known and is used by thousands of companies and the information is published around the Web?" Stanford said. "DR is not something that you need a rocket science degree to figure out."

Canonical last year completed the MSPAlliance's [MSP/Cloud Verify Program](#) certification process for cloud service providers and MSPs.

Disaster recovery certification options

Nevertheless, organizations are continuing to provide certifications in disaster recovery and business continuity, with various class format options and prices.

For example, [Mile2](#), a company based in Tampa, Fla., provides professional certifications for the cybersecurity industry and offers training for penetration testing, disaster recovery, incident handling and [network forensics](#).

Mile2's [Certified Disaster Recovery Engineer](#) course, which lasts four days and costs \$2,500, requires students to understand the principles of business continuity and disaster recovery. Students are expected to prepare a draft of their own business continuity and disaster recovery plan as well as prepare to take a certification exam to complete the course.

Over at the EC-Council, which provides information security education, training, and certification for IT professionals, the organization offers the [EC-Council Disaster Recovery Professional](#) certification, which teaches methods in identifying vulnerabilities and guides students in applying countermeasures to mitigate risks for an organization. Networking professionals are taught disaster recovery course principles, including preparation of a disaster recovery plan, assessing risks across the enterprise, and the implementation of a plan to recover from a disaster.

As [channel companies](#) consider their disaster recovery certification options, they should keep in mind the [consequences of a disaster](#) which could result in productivity losses, financial costs and damage to a customer's reputation, Demrovsky said. She also noted that her organization's research shows that 80% of Fortune 100 companies employ a DRI certified professional, which indicates the seriousness with which corporations view DR certifications. Given this, IT solution provider companies should follow suit.

"It's a dangerous mentality to think that DR certification is unnecessary given the frequency of disasters and the disruption these catastrophes cause to companies' business operations," Demrovsky said. "In a highly regulated business environment, having certified DR professionals on your team is an approach that will keep your IT systems in compliance to meet the needs of your customers when a disaster strikes."

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