

# the Availability Digest™

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--- achieving 100% uptime

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The digest of topics on Continuous Availability. More than Business Continuity Planning.  
BCP tells you how to **recover** from the effects of downtime.  
CA tells you how to **avoid** the effects of downtime.

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## Are Legacy Systems a Boon or a Shackle?

Many IT services used by enterprises are provided by legacy systems. They are systems that date back decades – often to the 1970s and 1980s. The systems are inflexible and not maintainable. Yet they continue to provide valuable services to organizations.

Legacy systems often prove to be a hindrance to a company's efforts to modernize its IT services. True, legacy systems can be wrapped with software so that they appear to be more modern with a graphical user interface and access to modern-day communication networks. However, it is difficult to add features such as mobile processing to meet the needs of today's users.

A major problem is that the cost and disruption of replacing a legacy system with a modern system prevents many companies from moving in this direction with its applications. Some companies are aggressively pursuing the replacement of their legacy systems, while others prefer to limp along by remaining with them.

Our article, "Minimizing the Risk of Legacy IT Systems," is an example of the stories we write for the Digest and for others. If you have an article, a case study, or a white paper that you would like written, come talk to us. We'd be glad to help you.

Dr. Bill Highleyman, Managing Editor

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## Never Again

### Wells Fargo Fails Testing

We have written extensively about the need for proper testing of applications and systems. It is only through exhaustive testing that a company can be assured that its systems and applications are functioning properly.

However, it seems that Wells Fargo, one of the big four banks in the United States, ignored this important step in its system operations.

Wells' troubles started early one morning when smoke was detected following routine maintenance. The online system started with a couple of errors, and the backup system recognized that the first system corrected itself. The backup system now thought that everything was OK; but things got out of whack, and the first system died. Now the backup system doesn't know the status of the original system, and it can't take over.

It was not obvious to the backup system that the online system had gone down. In effect, the online system was sick but not dead.

Wells' backup system is in a different location. It should have recognized the problem and taken over operations.

It is very difficult to test backup systems for every scenario. In fact, testing may be literally impossible for some scenarios.

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## Best Practices

### System Recovery 1960s Style

Recovering an application that had been running in a server that has failed can always be a daunting exercise. However, back in the 1960s, all it took was a chair on wheels.

That is how we recovered from a system failure at MiniData Payroll Services. MiniData specialized in providing payroll services for small companies. Our billboards said "You Pay 9. We Pay 15." That referred to the fact that we would provide payroll services for a company with 15 employees for \$9.

MiniData processed its payrolls on Digital PDP-8 computers. We had two identical computers to protect us from a system failure.

To recover from a system failure, all that had to be done was to move the DECtapes containing the payroll data from the failed system to the backup system. Thus, system recovery was simply a matter of wheeling my chair from the downed system to the new active system, moving the DECtapes in the process.

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## Minimizing the Risk of Legacy IT Systems

Legacy systems often stand in the way of digital transformation and a full view of operational performance. These proprietary and decentralized systems don't communicate with each other, making them a challenge to monitor in a comprehensive and efficient way.

In this article, we discuss five ways in which an organization can avoid system downtime while reducing legacy barriers that could be preventing digital transformation:

1. Understand the legacy environment.
2. Eliminate the siloed approach.
3. Rein in tool sprawl.
4. Automate to reduce human error.
5. Employ comprehensive operational visibility.

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## Availability Topics

### Microsoft Ends Support for Windows 7

Microsoft is ending support for its legacy IT infrastructure products Windows 7, Windows Server 2008 and Windows Server 2008 R2 on January 14, 2020. After that, Microsoft will no longer provide regular security updates for these products. Mainstream support for Windows 7 ended in 2015. Extended support will end in 2020.

A fair number of Windows 7 users have refused to update to Windows 10, even though for a while Microsoft was allowing this upgrade at no cost to customers. Windows 7 users can't or don't want to stop using the operating system. They may need compatibility with certain utilities, there may be financial concerns, or they may not like Windows 10 for some reason or other.

For a while, Microsoft was allowing this upgrade at no cost; but now customers must pay the licensing fee for Windows 10.

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## Tweets

### **@availabilitydig – The Twitter Feed of Outages**

A challenge every issue for the Availability Digest is to determine which of the many availability topics out there win coveted status as Digest articles. We always regret not focusing our attention on the topics we bypass.

Now with our Twitter presence, we don't have to feel guilty. This article highlights some of the @availabilitydig tweets that made headlines in recent days.

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