the Availability Digest

On Blogs and Discussion Groups
October 2007

An important part of your professional development and advancement is keeping up with where your industry is heading and with the technology pertinent to your industry. There are many avenues for doing this – books, magazines, newsletters, and conferences, to name a few.

But an often overlooked avenue is the many discussion groups and blogs that permeate the Internet. These afford an opportunity to not only learn about what is going on and to get answers to your questions but also to contribute to the needs of others through your own experience.

Our focus in the Availability Digest is on continuous availability, and we often visit blogs and discussion groups that pertain to high availability. Following is a list of some of these that may be of value to you.

ITUG Connection: Real-Time View

ITUG Connection: Real Time View (http://itug-connection.blogspot.com/) is a new blog that focuses on the HP NonStop community (ITUG was formerly the International Tandem User Group and represents the international HP NonStop user community). Written by Richard Buckle, former Chairman of ITUG, his blog includes high-availability business issues that transcend any one user community.

This blog focuses on three themes – platforms, attributes, and business intelligence:

- "Platforms" is taken in the broader sense and includes topics such as blades, open systems, and the service-oriented architecture.

- Attributes, or fundamentals, include availability, scalability, and security.

- Business intelligence focuses on large, high-performance databases.

With respect to availability, Richard states, "I am pretty passionate about this topic and truly believe it is the most important product differentiator." He goes on to say, " Availability touches all of our lives today and has an influence over many of the decisions we take on technology, so I can't believe I will ever run out of subject matter for this column."

Richard welcomes comments on his rather extensive postings. He also writes an op-ed column entitled "Real Time View." for the ITUG Connection magazine.

comp.sys.tandem

Tandem folks (now HP NonStop) maintain a very active discussion group on Google (http://groups.google.com/group/comp.sys.tandem/topics). Most of the postings are questions

that get almost immediate multiple responses. There is also some event information, such as regional group meetings.

comp.sys.stratus

This Stratus discussion group (http://groups.google.com/group/comp.sys.stratus/topics) covers all of Stratus' hardware products, including ftServer, Continuum, IBM System 88, and Olivetti CPS-32, as well as Stratus' various operating systems and any other software that runs on these systems.

John Bennett's Blog

Another blog from the HP world is that of John Bennett. John is HP's Worldwide Director for Business Continuity and Availability Solutions. His blog is generally vendor neutral and focuses on business continuity issues. It can be found at (http://h20325.www2.hp.com/blogs/bennett/).

He characterizes his blog as follows:

"Keeping the enterprise and its IT systems up and running in the face of risk and potential disruption is a critical requirement. So is the need to provide your IT users the excellent service they need. You need to keep up-to-date with emerging risks, risk mitigation and management approaches, technology trends related to high availability and business continuity, and best practices. I hope that my blog will give you insight into these issues and help make your job easier. Your thoughts on my views are always welcome."

The Risks Digest

The Risks Digest (http://catless.ncl.ac.uk/risks) is a forum on risks to the public in computers and related systems. It is sponsored by the ACM (Association for Computing Machinery) Committee on Computers and Public Policy. Through a useful index, it links to hundreds of Risks Digest issues dating from 1985. Topics cover a wide range of risks, from system failures to data theft and legal issues.

Its associated RISKS Forum is a moderated digest. Its USENET equivalent is comp.risks.

The Disaster Recovery Forum

The Disaster Recovery Forum (http://www.rothstein.com/wwwboard/forum.html) is hosted by Rothstein Associates and the Rothstein Catalog on Disaster Recovery. It is intended as a vehicle for business continuity professionals and novices alike to share ideas, experiences or concerns, raise issues, and seek assistance or inspiration on business continuity matters. You can join any of the topics or start a new one of your own.

A useful extension of this site is a list of links to other sites dealing in continuous availability. These links may be found at (http://www.rothstein.com/links/arch/rothstein_recommended7.html).

SQL Server High-Availability Forums

Here are two SQL Server discussion forums that deal with high availability. These are:

SQL Server Clustering forum –
http://groups.google.com/group/microsoft.public.sqlserver.clustering/topics

SQL Server replication forum –
http://groups.google.com/group/microsoft.public.sqlserver.replication/topics

These forums are actively monitored by Hilary Cotter, Rodney Fournier, and Geoff Hiten, among others. These people are all published and recognized authorities in these areas.

Note: The disparity in the way the term "active/active" is used in the clustering community and the way that we use it is clear from many of these postings (see our May, 2007 article, Active/Active Versus Clusters).

The SQLTeam.com

The SQLTeam.com (http://www.sqlteam.com/forums/) is a SQL server forum that is well organized into topics. Two of these topics are Replication and High Availability. The High-Availability forum covers clustering, database mirroring, log shipping, and backup issues for SQL Server.

VMWare Communities

Virtualization is being touted as an upcoming key technology for continuous availability. The leader in virtualization for industry standard servers is VMWare.

VMWare hosts a set of services for VMWare communities. These include personal blogs, collaborative wiki documents, and discussion threads. Watches can be set on discussions, documents, and blogs.

VMWare Communities can be accessed at
(http://www.vmware.com/communities/content/quicktour.html.

What Else Is There?

This, I am sure, is only a partial list of forums dealing with high availability. Many of you may participate in others. If you do, would you please email me at editor@availabilitydigest.com and let me know of them? Thanks.