covenco
DATA MANAGEMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE 365

CASE STUDY

Achieving fast, uninterrupted deliveries with IBM PowerVS

Proximity and Covenco, with IBM PowerVS.

Version 1.0 | January 2025

Proximity

About Proximity:
Proximity is a leading specialist in IBM i application development and support, focusing on ERP software and Manufacturing Execution Systems (MES).

Alongside its professional services offerings, Proximity operates Stream, a SaaS transport management solution for managing complex logistics workflows, helping to keep deliveries and supply chain processes on schedule.

Covenco combines experienced data management services with computer brokerage, hardware sales and support.

Since 2002, Covenco has consistently supported customers with world-class Disaster Prevention and Recovery Services for IBM Power infrastructures, further establishing their reputation among data management companies in the UK and across the globe.
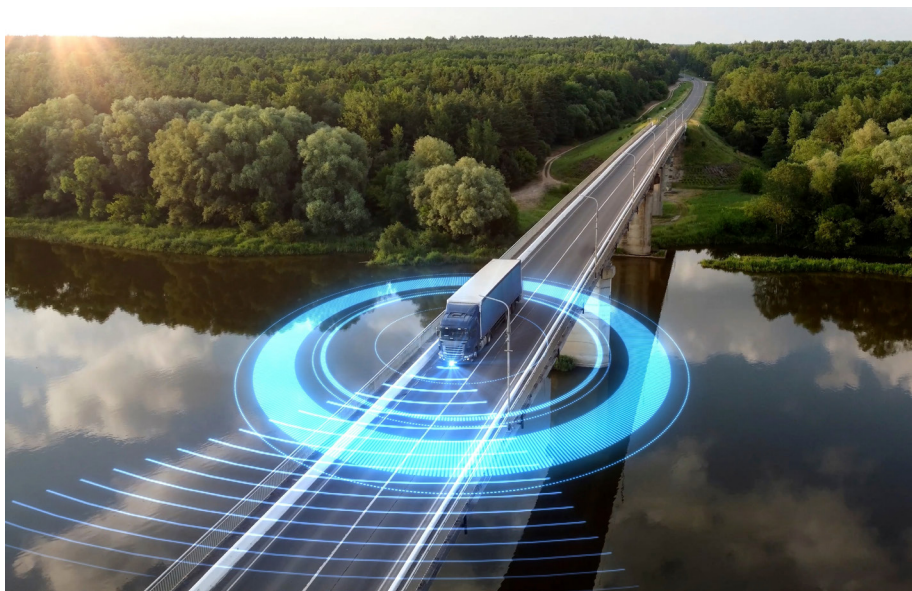
Covenco's combined data management and hardware operations mean that they can support any scale of IT operations, from small businesses to enterprise-scale data centres.

Introduction

This case study details Covenco's successful collaboration with Proximity, an IBM i application developer, in achieving a reliable and highly available Disaster Recovery system for their critical customer-facing business applications.

The project included the migration of essential business workloads from a third-party hosting provider to a robust Disaster Recovery Service (DR) solution built on **IBM Power Virtual Server (PowerVS)** within IBM Cloud.

The migration addressed Proximity's challenges with their incumbent provider's fluctuating costs and service reliability issues. Covenco's expertise in IBM Power infrastructure and disaster recovery strategies ensured a seamless transition with minimal downtime, delivering a highly available and cost-effective DR solution for Proximity's platform.

Delivering high availability for mission-critical logistics processes on IBM Power

With Stream, a high-stakes and time-sensitive transport management solution, IT service provider Proximity helps hundreds of companies keep their deliveries on schedule and maintain supply chain efficiency. The Stream application draws on the performance and reliability of IBM i and is trusted by pharmaceuticals, automotive companies, retailers and other businesses that rely on real-time data to manage logistics and deliveries.

With customers depending on Stream to manage over 50,000 daily deliveries, Proximity aims to meet the highest standards in availability and operational continuity.

Proximity's previous Disaster Recovery (DR) Service Provider was struggling to keep pace with the growth of Stream. The costs of the DR service were growing, and Proximity lacked confidence in its capability and scalability. As Proximity continued to expand to serve larger clients with fleets of hundreds of vehicles, the limitations of this DR solution presented a real business risk.

Dave Pickburn, Director and Founder at Proximity, explains: "If the system is down for even just a few hours, it could be catastrophic. With thousands of drivers and clients counting on us, we knew we needed a reliable solution that could scale seamlessly to deliver full performance almost instantly after a failover."

> "IBM Power Virtual Server offers a very efficient disaster recovery solution, providing the scalability and reliability to meet the needs of a real-time SaaS application. "
>
> **Dave Pickburn**
> Director and Founder, Proximity

Instantaneous disaster recovery

Proximity partnered with IBM and IBM Gold Business Partner Covenco to implement IBM® Power® Virtual Server (PowerVS) as a flexible, reliable, cloud-based DR solution for Stream.

IBM PowerVS allows Proximity to replicate data from applications running on the IBM i operating system in real-time and scale resources almost instantly during unplanned outages, helping the Stream service to remain up and running for every driver and every delivery.

Covenco worked alongside IBM to optimise the sizing and configuration of IBM PowerVS instances to meet Proximity's unique operational needs while keeping costs manageable.

Proximity worked closely with Covenco during overnight maintenance windows at weekends to deliver a smooth implementation and seamless transition.

> "The ability to rapidly dial up resources was a game changer for us. With our old solution, we had to shut the server down and power it back up, which added 20 minutes to the failover process. With IBM PowerVS, we simply define the recovery resources we need online, and the system adapts instantaneously."
>
> **Pete Samways**
> Development Manager and Co-Founder at Proximity

Business continuity, cost efficiency and client confidence

With the flexible, pay-as-you-go billing model of the IBM PowerVS cloud solution, Proximity gains business agility and can recover 50% faster with optimised performance at a fraction of the cost. Proximity only pays for the resources it consumes, enabling a highly cost-efficient disaster recovery process.

The DR solution designed, developed and maintained by Covenco helps Proximity maximise the availability of the Stream service, helping customers keep their complex logistics operations running smoothly and without interruption.

Today, Proximity also uses IBM PowerVS as a convenient tool to simplify infrastructure maintenance on its primary on-premises IBM Power servers. When the company wishes to carry out server maintenance, it can simply invoke the DR procedure and move production workloads to IBM PowerVS. When maintenance is complete, Proximity can then move the workloads back. This flexible capability enhances overall resilience and helps Proximity maintain its competitive edge in the highly demanding transport management industry.

> "IBM PowerVS offers a very efficient Disaster Recovery solution, providing the performance, scalability and reliability to meet the needs of a real-time SaaS application.
>
> Based on our very positive experience with the speed and flexibility of IBM PowerVS, we're now planning to use this DR approach for other clients and applications too. We even think that we could use IBM PowerVS as the primary instance for our production applications in the future."
>
> **Dave Pickburn**
> Director and Founder, Proximity

PowerVS: Predictable Pricing and Resource Efficiency

For Covenco and Proximity, replicating the primary infrastructure to PowerVS on IBM Cloud delivers substantial benefits over other third-party solution providers:

Transparent pricing:
PowerVS offers a transparent subscription-based pay-as-you-go billing model, allowing Proximity to forecast IT budgets accurately and avoid unexpected cost fluctuations. Consequently, Proximity only incurs charges for the resources they consume, eliminating the need to pay for excess capacity.

Elastic Provisioning:
PowerVS boasts elastic provisioning capabilities, allowing Proximity to take advantage of allocated processing power, memory, and network bandwidth, which can be dynamically adjusted based on real-time requirements. During normal operations, the DR environment on PowerVS can be configured to run on minimal resources, significantly reducing ongoing costs.

Bursting Capabilities:
In the event of a failover to the DR environment, PowerVS can automatically scale up resources (CPU, memory, network) to meet the demands of live production workloads, ensuring optimal performance without incurring unnecessary charges for perpetually high resource allocation.

Infrastructure Efficiencies:
Eliminating the need for dedicated in-house recovery hardware translates to substantial cost savings for Proximity. They no longer need to invest solely in physical servers, maintenance contracts, and associated cooling and power requirements for disaster recovery.

Proximity was given a comprehensive analysis by Covenco's team of engineers that set out the opportunities and costs for all three solutions. The business case became apparent immediately.

Challenges Overcome by Covenco

Covenco meticulously addressed the main challenges presented during the migration, including:

PowerVS Instance Provisioning:
Covenco defined and provisioned the optimal PowerVS instance on IBM Cloud, tailored to meet Proximity's unique needs and workload requirements.

Workload Migration:
Covenco ensured seamless migration of workloads from the incumbent in to IBM Cloud on PowerVS, maintaining zero downtime for Proximities applications.

Network Design and Provisioning:
Covenco designed and implemented a robust network solution within the solution to support the secure communication between their on-premises systems and the PowerVS instance in the Cloud.

Data Migration and Replication:
Covenco built the base instance in PowerVS and employed MIMIX from Precisely for the initial data seed, followed by continuous synchronisation between the primary systems and the DR environment, ensuring data consistency.

The Outcome:
Through this successful implementation of IBM PowerVS, Covenco delivered a comprehensive High Availability (HA) solution for Proximity. This solution replicates their critical IBM Power services and workloads to the secure and reliable PowerVS instance in the IBM Cloud.

Proximity can now failover to their DR environment to seamlessly handle planned and unplanned downtime, guaranteeing uninterrupted business operations and data protection.

About Covenco

Covenco connects data management services with IT hardware supply and support. With over 35 years of experience in the IT industry, our team offers a reliable source of expertise for data centre administrators.

Covenco supports businesses with world-class data protection, backup, and disaster recovery services.

Our UK data centres have over two Petabytes of customer data under management at any time, and we are fully ISO27001 accredited for data security.