

# Synergistic Offers Hot Site DR Service for iSeries

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by Alex Woodie

[Synergistic Online Solutions](#) is working to fill a gap in disaster recovery solutions for the iSeries with its offering, called SOSD2D. The solution, which uses remote journaling and the Internet to send snapshots of customers' data to a backup iSeries running in a Synergistic hot site data center, provides a better recovery point objective than tape, and some of the benefits of a high availability solution, but leaves out the hassle and expense of acquiring a second iSeries.

From its headquarters in Detroit, Michigan, Synergistic Online Solutions has evolved over the years. In the AS/400 heydays, the [IBM](#) business partner moved a lot of hardware, but as the good times quickly ebbed six years ago, the company shifted its strategy and began to offer more custom development and other technical services.

Four years ago, one of Synergistic's clients came to the company with a request, remembers Keith Carpenter, the company's sales manager. "They were looking for an HA-type solution, but it wasn't high availability so much as disaster recovery," he says. "What they were really looking for was, in the event of a disaster, that they have someplace to go that not only had hardware ready, but had the data ready, too. So our engineers went to work to find out how to leverage remote journaling."

What emerged from this development effort was SOSD2D, a collection of hardware, software, and services designed to be a place where OS/400 shops can go during a disaster. The offering combines the remote journaling plumbing that IBM has built into the iSeries line, an apply process written by Synergistic, and the use of Synergistic's 50 or so AS/400, iSeries, and System i servers stationed at the company's data centers in Detroit and Kansas City. Although the SOSD2D software won't run on them, the vendor even stocks some old S/38s.

Once the software has been configured and users choose how often they want to replicate their changed data and objects (usually at four-, eight-, 12-, or 24-hour intervals), the software just runs in the background, and there is minimal maintenance required by the user, Carpenter says. Synergistic's 12-person tech support staff monitors the status of data replication from the data center, and can fix any out-of-synch conditions that crop up, he says.

As a hybrid offering, SOSD2D has many competitors, including the established OS/400 high availability software vendors, the new electronic vaulting crowd that simulates tape backups over the Internet, and the hot-site providers, including [Sungard](#) or IBM Business Continuity and Recovery Services (BCRS). When it comes to the latter, however, Synergistic aimed to be a bit more nimble. One of Synergistic's early SOSD2D users already had a contract with Sungard, but they wanted something that "if a hurricane struck, they could be back in business in a handful of hours, instead of the three-to-five days in a hotsite scenario," Carpenter says.

Synergistic has attracted a dozen customers since SOSD2D was deployed at the first customer location a year ago. The DR outsourcing solution is most popular among mid size organizations with revenues in the \$200 million to \$1 billion range, particularly among manufacturers, trucking companies, and government agencies, Carpenter says. The company started with clients mostly in the Midwest, but now it has customers spanning from Florida to Los Angeles.

Synergistic offers SOSD2D customers two choices when it comes to the quality and quantity of OS/400 processing power at Synergistic's data centers. The most affordable option is the "shared solution group," which provides first-come, first-served access to Synergistic's OS/400 computing power. This choice will work for those companies that don't expect their disasters to coincide with other organizations' disasters. Customers that don't want to compete for processing power in the event of an emergency can select the "dedicated iSeries" offering, where Synergistic reserves a portion of an iSeries that can support a certain number of users. With this offering, Synergistic will work to ensure that the hosted environment or LPAR is kept as up-to-date as possible by regularly applying the latest PTFs and making program changes to the hosted environment on behalf of the customer.

Synergistic has conducted failover tests, but it hasn't had any of its customers declare a disaster. That will be the ultimate test. But hurricane season is just over a month old now, and lasts for another three months. Synergistic includes all labor and networking charges in its SOSD2D fees. Customers pay somewhere in the neighborhood of 60 percent of the cost of a full-blown high availability solution per year, depending on the options selected, Carpenter says. As a rough guideline, this puts the solution in the \$15,000 to \$20,000 per year category. For more information, visit [www.synergisticonline.com](http://www.synergisticonline.com).