



ASHFORD.COM

## Jewels of Data are Safe with Offsite Replication

### Solution Overview

#### Industry

Internet Retail Sales

#### Architecture

- Compaq 8500 8-way servers with RAID and hot spares
- Windows NT 4.0 operating system; Windows 2000 operating system with Microsoft Cluster Services; MS SQL Server version 7
- Multiple high-speed lines to main and remote data centers

#### Products Used

- NSI Software Double-Take for Windows 2000 / NT

***Internet commerce sites must always be up and available to customers. Even more importantly, the customers' orders and data must be protected and secure. Ashford.com, the leading Internet retailer of luxury and premium accessories, knows about precious commodities. That's why the company keeps their data safe and secure with the latest in server and software technologies. The jewels Ashford.com ships and the data it stores are both fully protected.***

Ashford.com offers more than 14,000 styles of new and vintage watches, designer jewelry, fragrances, leather accessories, ties, scarves, sunglasses, writing instruments and corporate gifts from more than 350 leading brands. The company has enjoyed a strong and steady growth in sales as a result of their commitment to provide the best customer service experience possible. How did Ashford dramatically grow while maintaining a secure and protected infrastructure? Ashford.com instituted a multi-tier approach to protect their data and sustain site availability.

"First and foremost we have to make sure the site is always up," said Darrell Starnes, Director of Systems Infrastructure for Ashford.com. "We must stay on the net and accepting orders." Ashford.com has set up a mirror site in Austin, Texas—hundreds of miles away from its Houston headquarters. "If a disaster, such as a tornado, flood or hurricane were to strike us here in Houston, it's extremely unlikely that Austin would also be hit," he said. The two sites are joined over DS3 links provided by Ashford.com's ISP. If the Houston site is down, Austin can step in immediately, with the full-bandwidth capabilities of the original site.

At headquarters, the heart and soul of the Ashford.com site is the Microsoft SQL server that hosts inventory, sales catalogs, purchase orders, inventory management and order management applications. The SQL data resides on Microsoft Windows 2000 utilizing cluster services, providing local disk protection. Hosted on 8-way Compaq servers with multi-level RAID, UPS and hot spare drives, the data is further protected by NSI Software's Double-Take.

"We spool data from the main database servers to a backup server," explains Mr. Starnes. "Then, periodically, the spooled changes from Double-Take are sent out to our mirrored site." The spooling Double-Take server has a great deal of disk space, and can cache a great number of transactions and data. "This has an additional benefit beyond sending data off to the disaster recovery site," explained Mr. Starnes. "The cached or spooled data on the Double-Take server can be used here in Houston, in case of a localized disaster. For example, if a server goes down or a database application has problems, I can restore in a matter of minutes



and still have replication of critical data to the offsite recovery center with the data spooled locally.” An additional benefit to using Double-Take is its unique ability to work with a slow link; if the mirrored site link is slow, Ashford.com still has all data on the hardened, local server. “What we like most is the flexibility of Double-Take,” stated Mr. Starnes. “From local protection to offsite disaster recovery, we can have both in one package and configure it to serve our needs on a day by day basis.”

What does Ashford.com have planned for Double-Take? The company is deploying a customer personalization system to store preferences and specialized data using Double-take’s local and offsite replication application.

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Two Hudson Palce  
Suite 700  
Hoboken, NJ 07030  
800-775-8674

[www.nsisoftware.com](http://www.nsisoftware.com)