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Simplifying IBM i Disaster Recovery

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Session overview

- Why IBM i DR is still hard
- The two replication architectures explained
- The hidden burdens: runbooks, green screens, and expertise gaps
- What modern SaaS orchestration looks like
- Architecture walkthrough: agentless, browser-based DR
- Real-world scenarios and key takeaways

About This Session

This is a practitioner-focused session — no sales pitch, no marketing.

We'll look at the real challenges IBM i teams face with DR, and how the landscape is evolving.

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IBM i DR: Why Is It Still So Hard?

The platform is unique — and that's part of the problem

- IBM i uses single-level storage — objects, not files
- Replication requires deep OS-level knowledge
- Journal management is critical but poorly understood
- Specialist skills are scarce and expensive
- Most teams have only tested DR once — at implementation

73%

of IBM i shops have never completed a successful DR test

2–4 hrs

typical manual switchover time, often longer without a specialist

1 person

holds the DR runbook knowledge in many IBM i shops

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IBM i DR: Why Is It Still So Hard?

Understanding the requirement

- Customers, in general, often do not have a firm understanding of the business needs of the DR solution
- Without a good understanding of the business impact of an outage, it is almost impossible to design a solution
- Process around the switch are often not optimal
  - For example, one customer was not allowed to go into production on the target system until it was verified against the original production system!

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IBM i DR: Why Is It Still So Hard?

Understanding how to manage the solution

- Most shops only test infrequently
- The test often fails, yet it is deemed that the test is complete
  - It is only a complete test after a successful test
- An example, was a swiss bank who knew they had a two hour window to achieve a switch
  - One Sunday, the started the test at 10:00am and were very pleased to be complete by 11:59am
  - The only problem was, this was a failure. The reason - They were all sat at their desks waiting for the “Failure” event.
  - In reality they would have taken time before they started, to assess the correct course of action

Comparing the Two Replication Approaches

Block-Level / Hardware Replication

e.g. IBM PowerHA SystemMirror

- **How:** Mirrors disk sectors at storage layer
- **Requires:** Matching storage on both sides
- **Strength:** No application changes needed
- **Limit:** Hardware-dependent; DR LPAR storage must match
- **UI:** Primarily 5250 green screen and CL commands

Logical / Journal-Based Replication

e.g. Assure MIMIX, iCluster, Maxava

- **How:** Replays IBM i journals (before/after images of objects)
- **Requires:** Journal configuration; works across hardware types
- **Strength:** Transaction-consistent; supports cloud targets
- **Limit:** Journal management complexity; expertise required
- **UI:** Modern tools have browser GUIs, but 5250 still common

The Hidden Burdens of Traditional IBM i DR

Runbook Complexity

- Dozens of manual steps across green screen and CL commands
- Runbooks go stale between tests
- Under pressure, manual steps get skipped or misordered
- No audit trail for who did what during a real event

Expertise Concentration

- One person often owns the entire DR process
- IBM i skills pool is aging and shrinking
- MSPs manage multiple customer environments with limited headcount
- Holidays, turnover, and illness create dangerous single points of failure

Visibility Gaps

- Replication lag and cluster health often unknown until failover
- No unified view across multiple clusters or environments
- Alerts are green-screen-only — no mobile, no dashboard
- Compliance reporting is manual and error-prone

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What Modern IBM i DR Looks Like

From Green Screen to Browser Without Adding Headcount

IBM Cloud

What SaaS Orchestration Changes

BEFORE

Traditional manual DR

- ✗ 5250 green screen, CL commands, SSH sessions
- ✗ Runbook with 40+ manual steps
- ✗ No real-time health visibility
- ✗ One specialist must be available 24/7
- ✗ DR tests are stressful, infrequent, and inconclusive

AFTER

SaaS orchestration layer

- **Browser-based UI** — no terminal emulator required
- **Automated discovery** of clusters and LPARs
- **Continuous health monitoring** with alerts
- **Guided orchestrated failover** — not a 40-step runbook
- **Scalable across environments** — on-prem, cloud, hybrid

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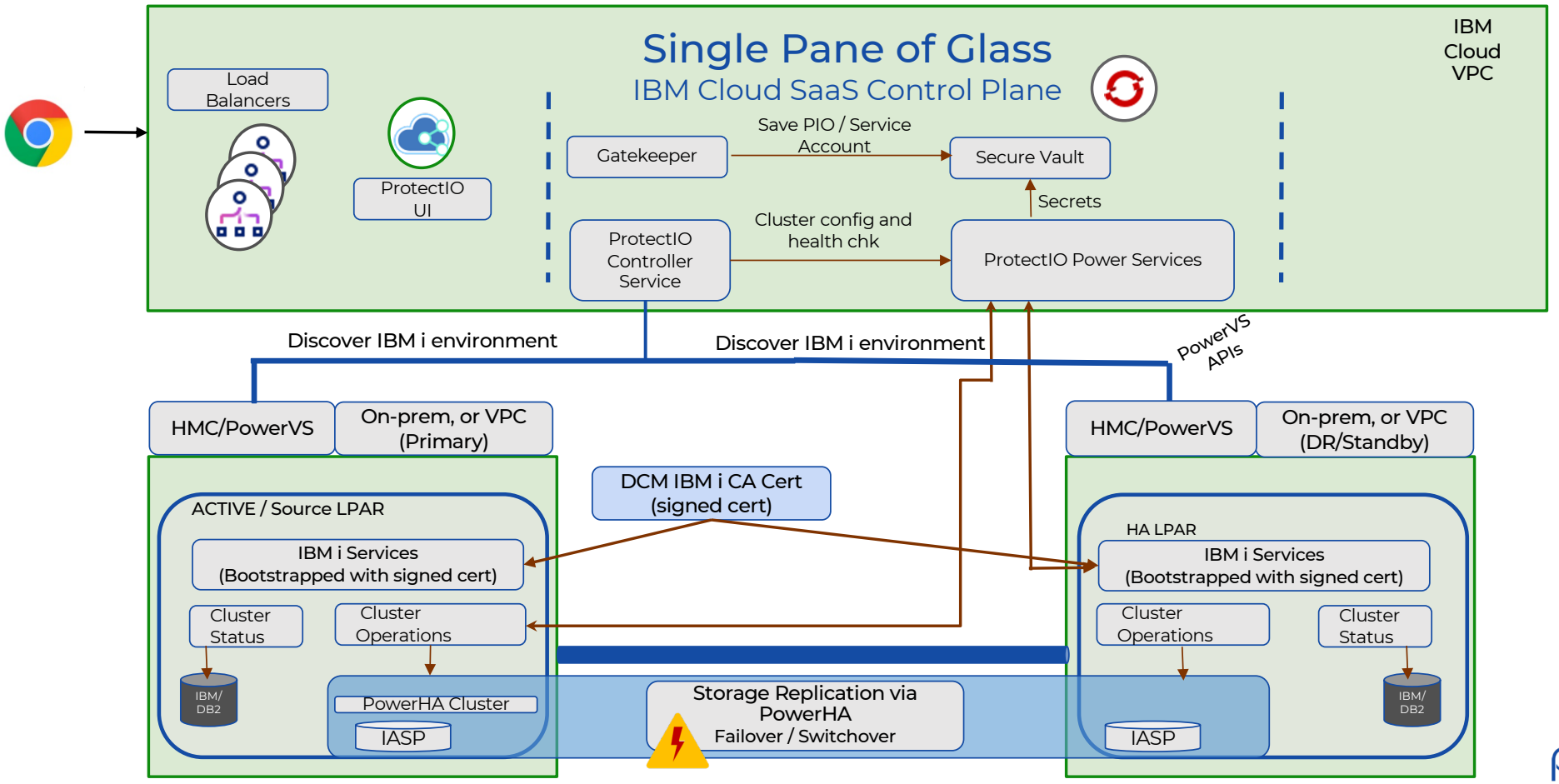
ProtectIO - for Power and PowerVS IBM i Workloads

ProtectIO - Power



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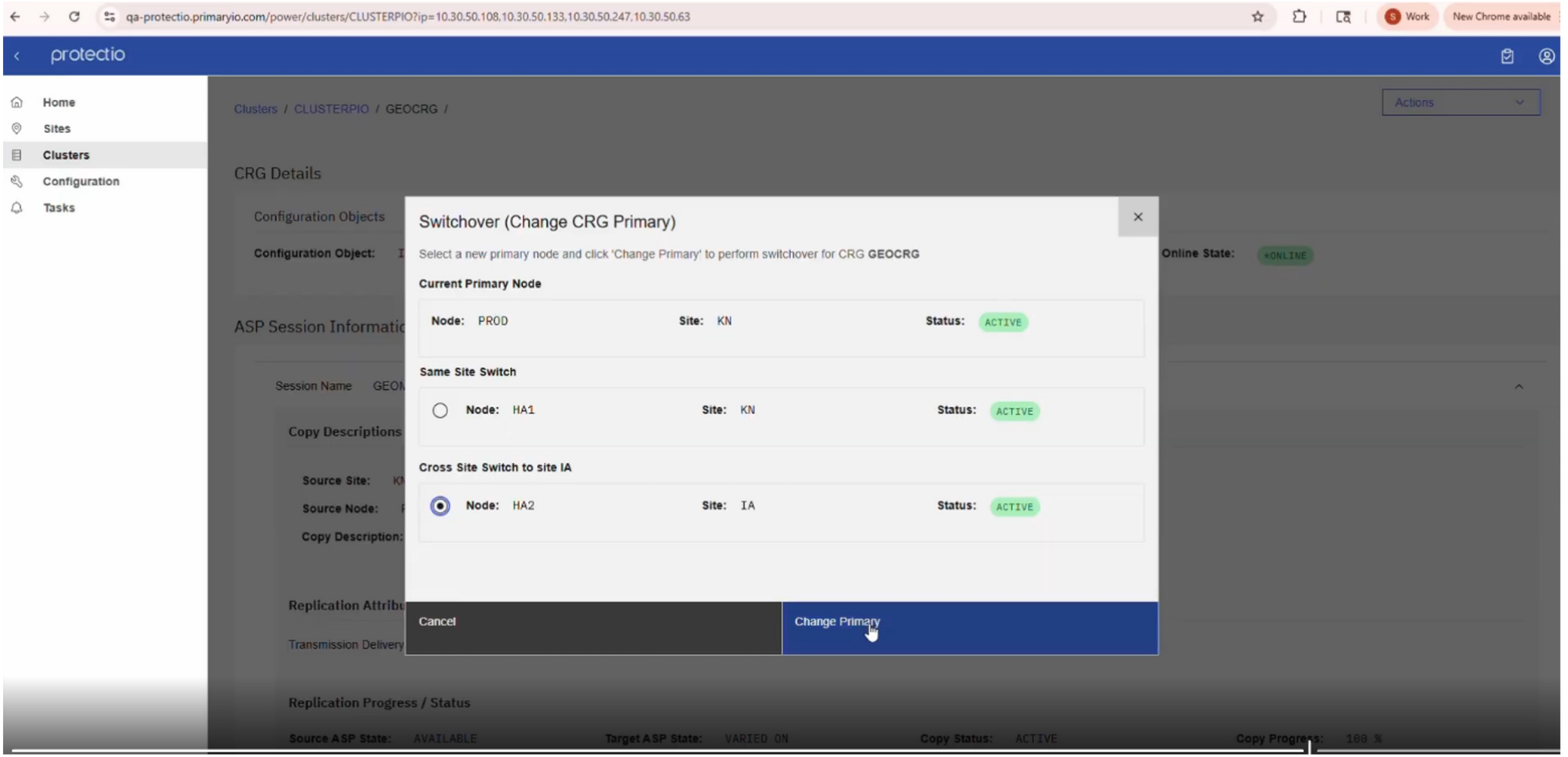
Cluster switchover UI



Real-World Scenarios

Scenario 1: The Weekend Outage *Production LPAR fails Saturday night. Your IBM i specialist is on holiday.*
With orchestration: **Any authorized team member initiates failover from a browser in minutes. No CL knowledge required.**

Scenario 2: The MSP Managing 12 Customers *Each customer has its own IBM i environment, DR cluster, and runbook variations.*
With orchestration: **A single pane of glass monitors all clusters. Health alerts surface before they become outages.**

Scenario 3: The Annual DR Test *Auditors require documented evidence of a successful DR test. Last year's test took 6 hours and was never fully completed.*
With orchestration: **Orchestrated switchover with full audit trail. Test reports generated automatically for compliance.**

Key Takeaways

1. The replication layer is not enough

PowerHA protects your data. Orchestration makes that protection usable when it matters most.

2. Green screen expertise is a liability

When DR depends on one person knowing 40 commands, you don't have a DR plan — you have a single point of failure.

3. SaaS changes the economics

Agentless, cloud-hosted orchestration removes deployment burden and scales across any number of environments.

4. Your DR plan needs to survive you

If the person who built your DR process left tomorrow, could your business recover? Accessible orchestration closes that gap.

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Thank you

Questions?
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Appendix Slides

Acknowledgements

With thanks to primaryIO for their DRaaS schematics