Always On during Black Friday

South Africans are excepted to visit retail stores and online shopping sites this weekend to grab the best shopping deals on Black Friday.

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While historically an American retail industry event marking the start of the Christmas shopping season, anticipation is building that this year will be an even bigger one for local e-tailing stores. However, some sites experienced slow websites, with several even crashing on the busy day as they were unable to keep up with the increase in traffic.

"Availability is critical for retailers. Being able to quickly backup and restore data in the event of an outage is critical to ensure customer satisfaction during one of the busiest retail periods of the year," says Warren Olivier, regional manager for Southern Africa at Veeam. And while some sites are starting online Black Friday specials a day in advance, this does not seem to stop the surge of traffic over the weekend.

Reality check

"Big shopping days such as Black Friday provide a reality check for many companies on the importance of the data centre and availability. Downtime could have a damaging effect on revenue and online reputation. For many retailers, everything ties back to the data centre including the point of sale and website. So if an incident does occur, then it is multiplied because of the rush associated to this buying pattern," he says.

Olivier believes that to reduce such a risk and capitalise on the anticipated business benefits of Friday, retailers should leverage the data they have to determine a number of factors such as how many transactions can be made in one day to ensure the back-end infrastructure can handle the surge. For the always-on retailer to work during this busy shopping period, they should consider implementing an availability solution that offers some key capabilities.

Elements to implement

These are high-speed recovery, recovering services in 15 minutes or less; data loss avoidance, with backups made at least every 15 minutes; verified protection, meaning failing to recover backups will no longer be an issue; leveraging backups to provide a production-like test environment so that any potential issues are spotted. Implementing these elements would mean real savings and more improved revenue opportunities.

"The final capability is to have complete visibility, which is absolutely critical to know how the data centre is operating on a day like Black Friday as workloads like these days are not the norm," concludes Olivier.