Cuisines Schmidt goes virtual with IBM TotalStorage SAN Volume Controller for flexible, cost-effective storage

Overview

- ***The Challenge***
  Create a cost-effective, highly scalable and resilient storage environment to manage growing data volumes securely; align data storage costs with business needs

- ***The Solution***
  Implemented IBM TotalStorage SAN Volume Controller with two IBM TotalStorage Enterprise Storage Servers (ESS 800)

- ***The Benefit***
  Significant increase in performance of storage systems; virtualisation of storage has brought enhanced flexibility and scalability; rapid implementation and training cycle; improved security for vital enterprise data

Founded in 1947, Cuisines Schmidt (www.cuisines-schmidt.com) is the French leader in the manufacture of fitted kitchens and bathrooms, and has a strong focus on the European market. The company has three factories, two in the Alsace region of France, and one in Germany, and sells its products through more than 450 retail partners throughout Europe.

Cuisines Schmidt's strategic aim – to build its market share across Europe – will entail continual growth in data volumes, so the company needed to implement a scalable, cost-effective storage solution to ensure that its IT systems could continue to serve the business effectively. The existing Storage Area Network (SAN) – supplied by a leading storage vendor – was at full capacity, did not allow systems to be restored quickly enough, and was not effectively disaster-proofed.

Vincent Lettler, CIO of Cuisines Schmidt, comments, "Compatibility problems meant that our previous SAN could not be upgraded, so we compared solutions from the existing vendor and from IBM. Our aims were: to secure data, reduce the administrative complexity, improve performance, reduce time-to-restore, and create a solution with a long lifespan. We also wanted to be able to add new storage capacity quickly and cost-effectively, to ensure that we could respond to new business requirements."

Virtualisation for variable costs

Following a detailed proof of concept and a visit to a successful customer site in the UK, the company selected the proposed solution from IBM: a new SAN built around IBM TotalStorage SAN Volume Controller (SVC) and two IBM TotalStorage Enterprise Storage Servers (ESS 800). Cuisine Schmidt's 20 UNIX® and Intel®-based servers and its main production server, IBM @server iSeries Model 820, are connected to the SAN using fibre links.

Says Lettler, "The key advantage of the IBM solution was that it offered virtualised storage. SVC gives us a single view of all our storage, and enables us to quickly add new capacity of practically any kind. This means that we can grow our capacity at variable cost – helping us to align IT expenditure with business needs."

"For example, we can add low-cost storage for non-essential data and high-performance storage for production data, and even add in systems from other vendors. SVC puts us in total control of our storage, enabling us to be highly responsive."

Faster, easier, more secure

The IBM solution was implemented and all data migrated within just 18 days; the benefits were equally swift to arrive. "With the new IBM solution, our storage performance immediately increased by a factor of three," says Lettler, "and the migration of data was a total success. SVC is a new technology, and the excellent transfer of skills from IBM and the ease-of-use of the software meant that our administrators were managing the system effectively within just half a day."

Time-to-restore has improved to one hour, meeting Cuisine Schmidt's target, and data is now better protected against disaster, being duplicated across both ESS servers using RAID 5 technology. Lettler comments, "With the previous solution, we were not able to restart quickly enough, and we had a single point of failure, which was very risky. Now, we can rapidly restore our production systems and we will be able to move our main storage servers to different locations to further improve resilience."

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> *Vincent Lettler, CIO, Cuisines Schmidt*

Future flexibility

Cuisines Schmidt is introducing a new production control system which will allow it to see where individual items are in the production cycle, to view the stages they have passed through, and to work out how to make the cycle more efficient. One possibility for the future is to move from two working shifts of eight hours to three eight-hour shifts, in order to increase output. Cuisine Schmidt's plan to implement IBM FlashCopy in 2005 will reduce backup time windows, which will make it easier to run factory control systems around the clock.

Lettler concludes, "The IBM solution has set us up perfectly for the future, providing a highly scalable virtualised storage environment that can grow with our requirements. SVC gives us full flexibility, making it faster and easier to manage data and add new storage volumes, and we are confident that the solution will bring major cost savings in the coming years. The support from IBM was another factor in our choice of vendor; there is a large local install-base of ESS systems, so we know that we can call on highly-experienced technicians to resolve any issues we may have."

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