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Customer

Competitor Group

Industries

Recreation, Media

Challenge

Improve the performance of data-intensive applications for analytics and video editing – cost effectively.

Results

4X faster VM provisioning versus LUN-based solutions

Lower CapEx with the use of existing blade servers

Performance density up to 20 effective TBs per server for local, fast read I/O

2X the performance of the previous storage solution

80% less capacity required with the high levels of dedupe and compression experienced

“At CGI, our focus on the active lifestyle means we are keenly aware of the importance of performance—both with our athletes as well as with our business. When our partners at VPLS Solutions showed us that Datrium was effectively running laps around our current HPE system, we knew we had a winner for our vSphere environment.”

- Bobby Phimmasane, Director of Information Technology

BACKGROUND

Competitor Group Inc. (CGI) is a leading global media and event entertainment company dedicated to promoting an active lifestyle. With 250 employees across three offices, the company runs 70+ world-class events, including the Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon Series, the TriRock Series and the Events DC Nation’s Triathlon. CGI also publishes Competitor, Triathlete, Velo and Women’s Running magazines, and operates an active lifestyle digital network, the Competitor Endurance Sports Network. CGI captures data on active individuals through Racelt, its event registration platform.

COMPANY CHALLENGE

Lagging Analytics, Video

CGI runs some of the nation’s largest sporting events including the popular Rock ‘n’ Roll Marathon races, drawing as many as 50,000 to 60,000 registrants. With ever-increasing data from event signups and media subscriptions, and incoming video from events, the company’s storage requirements grow daily.

As CGI began transitioning to a fully virtualized server environment, it noticed lagging performance with its incumbent storage solution, HPE StoreVirtual, especially for data-intensive applications such as video editors. Yet adding capacity would be a pricey proposition with the HPE solution considering the lack of deduplication and compression.

RESULTS

Trusted Solution Partner Sets a Course for Growth

CGI reached out to a trusted technology solution partner, VPLS Solutions, for a full assessment of and recommendations on the company’s infrastructure. Based on CGI’s 10 Gigabit Ethernet (10GbE) infrastructure, existing blade server environment and extensive use of VMWare, VPLS Solutions saw Datrium as an innovative, cost-effective fit to meet the company’s needs now and down the road. While CGI also considered other storage solutions, the company found Datrium’s performance, capacity efficiency and VM-centric management in vCenter a superior alternative.

“From a storage, performance and cost perspective, Datrium made perfect sense, especially when you consider that with traditional storage options we’d have to go through the array user interface,” says Bobby Phimmasane, Director of Information Technology, Competitor Group. “The simplicity with Datrium is really what got me because we’re a small team. We’re able to reduce management time, gain a lot of space, and performance is amazing.”

Provisioning is 4X Faster—Right in vCenter

For the small IT team at CGI, management with Datrium delivered much-needed time-savings. Instead of managing individual LUNs, Phimmasane simply handles any storage needs right within vCenter.

“Since we’re a smaller IT shop, I like the simplicity of Datrium,” Phimmasane says. “We no longer have to deal with LUNs. In vCenter, we can observe

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performance at the VM, move them around as necessary, and do any other troubleshooting simply. And the graphs are crisp and modern.”

When Phimmasane brought a new virtual machine online, he just ran a template without concerns about volume, LUNs or space planning. “Spinning up a new VM on Datrium was honestly the simplest and quickest I’ve ever done,” he says. “It took a quarter of the time it used to.”

Twice the Performance

Datrium fit perfectly with CGI’s blade server infrastructure. The company configured each blade with two 1.8TB flash SSDs. With current data reduction ratios, each blade server has approximately 20 effective terabytes of instance flash—ample performance density to maintain CGI’s application data local within each blade for unparalleled speed.

After deploying Datrium, Phimmasane noticed an immediate boost in performance, especially with video editing applications, where an estimated doubling of IOPs expedited the process. It’s speed that likewise accelerated data analysis as CGI aims to understand athletes and subscribers better.

Competitor Group found an added measure of performance by running Datrium’s Insane Mode, which accelerates VM performance at the touch of a button. In fact, the company now runs exclusively in the accelerated mode.

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‘Ridiculously’ Low Cost Per Terabyte

The move to Datrium not only improved performance, but also delivered impressive economics. With built-in compression and deduplication, Phimmasane observed a 5.6-to-1 data reduction. The Datrium DVX immediately freed up terabytes of capacity, shrinking CMI’s storage footprint by 80%, a notable achievement given a portion of CGI’s data is video and can be hard to dedupe and compress.

Moving forward, CGI’s new storage model allows them to affordably accommodate growth. “The amount of storage you get per dollar cost is just ridiculous, especially with deduplication and compression,” Phimmasane says. “We’re going to start consolidating a ton more on Datrium to lower our footprint.”

Enterprise-Level Support

From pre-sales to ongoing support, the confidence in VPLS Solutions and the early experience with the Datrium solution made CGI’s decision to go with Datrium an easy one. Deployment ran smoothly, and since installation, Phimmasane has experienced a higher level of attention than he ever expected.

“Support has been enterprise level,” Phimmasane says. “Datrium even spotted a problem occurring with another vendor that affected storage and called me immediately. They got on the phone with that vendor and saw it through multiple days until it was resolved.”

Learn more about Datrium server-powered storage at www.datrium.com.

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