Storage Strategy Helps Organization Manage Data Growth

FlexITy's Comprehensive Solution Reduces the Complexity of an Agency's Legacy Storage Environment.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

WORKPLACE SAFTEY AND INSURANCE BOAD (WSIB)
- Injury and illness insurer
- Toronto, Ontario

BUSINESS CHALLENGE
- Manage storage capacity in face of rapid business data growth
- Simplify complex legacy environment
- Control costs and avoid disruption while transitioning to new solutions

PARTNER SOLUTIONS
- Hitachi Data Systems storage and virtualization tools
- Diligent ProtecTIER VTL deduplication
- Cisco MDS directors for highperformance SAN

BUSINESS RESULTS
- Consolidated storage from multiple legacy arrays to one centrally managed array
- Reduced yearly storage expenditures from $3.3M to $1.7M
- Increased storage capacity by 300 percent

Business Challenge

When documentation threatens to stop supporting services and instead get in the way of them, it may be time for a change. At Ontario's Workplace Safety and Insurance Board (WSIB), which provides insurance for workplace injuries and illnesses covered under the Workplace Safety and Insurance Act, annual business data growth of 55 percent was putting a strain on legacy storage systems and creating management challenges.

The regulatory body processes nearly 84 million claims documents annually, and it needed a solution that could address its significant storage capacity needs. When the WSIB began exploring options to replace its complex and heterogeneous legacy storage environment with one that could be managed from a central location, it was impressed with FlexITy's proposed solution.

"Handling the flood of business data created in an increasingly digital work environment is a problem facing organizations of all types," says Peter Stavropoulos, President and CEO of FlexITy Solutions. "Legacy storage arrays were not built for the volume of information generated in today's workplace, nor for the complex management tasks that come with such data. The WSIB's heterogeneous environment, which included mainframe and open systems, offered significant opportunity for improvement by moving to a consolidated management approach."

The WSIB had worked with FlexITy on storage migrations in the past, so the agency knew it could count on the provider to plan for data growth and implement the storage technologies needed to create a carefully architected solution within a set budget and timeframe.

"The comprehensive plan to manage all areas of WSIB's infrastructure greatly simplified their storage environment while reducing costs, making FlexITy the ideal partner choice," Stavropoulos says. "We were eager to implement our tailored set of strategy recommendations."

Partner Solutions

Critical to handling the WSIB's data problem was finding a way to consolidate storage from multiple legacy arrays to a single centrally managed system. FlexITy helped the WSIB develop a new, multitiered storage strategy following the best practices of the Information Lifecycle Management (ILM) framework. ILM considers how data is handled from creation to deletion, segmenting information by mission criticality and dividing up storage approaches accordingly.

With this system, current and/or highly critical data is kept readily available on high performance disk storage, while less critical and less frequently accessed data can be moved to slower, less expensive storage media. The WSIB established a five-tier storage model.

High-performance, Tier 1 disk storage, which is the most expensive, is reserved for mission-critical production data such as current compensation claims information. User data and essential business applications are kept in the Tier 2 storage array, which costs 50 to 60 percent less. Even cheaper disk storage is used for Tier 3 data, which includes system images, backups and snapshots of production databases. Tier 4 is a disk-based online enterprise storage archive for Tiers 1-3, while Tier 5 is an offline tape backup that is performed daily for the first three tiers.

To implement and manage this multi-tier solution, FlexITy worked with several of its hardware partners, including Hitachi Data Systems (HDS) and Cisco. Using HDS enterprise storage arrays and virtualization capabilities, as well as switching capabilities from Cisco's MDS directors, FlexITy was able to create a virtualized environment and deploy a high-performance storage area network (SAN) with intelligent fabric features for storage and data management.

> "The WSIB implementation shows how Hitachi's unique combination of hardware and software solutions can be used to improve system agility while lowering costs, ultimately allowing organizations to maximize returns on their investment in a virtual storage infrastructure," says Hitachi Data Systems Regional Vice President and General Manager Barry Morrison. "The Hitachi Command Suite can be used in conjunction with other HDS storage tools such as the Hitachi Content Platform and the Hitachi NAS platform to streamline performance and unify system management regardless of data type."

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These hardware solutions were complemented by the use of ProtecTIER deduplication and backup technology with Virtual Tape Library (VTL) support, a Diligent product which HDS sold under an OEM relationship in conjunction with its own storage arrays. By creating a blend of disk-based and tapebased storage, FlexITy's plan outfitted the WSIB with the solutions to be resilient against data loss threats while minimizing costs and architectural complexity.

Business Results

Not only did a new storage architecture make it easier for the WSIB to centrally manage its data and consolidate legacy systems, the transition produced measurable business results. By moving to a tiered framework that distributed information to lower cost storage solutions based on importance, the WSIB reduced its yearly storage expenditures from $3.3 million to $1.7 million. And these cost savings did not have to come with any compromise in either performance or capacity. Rather, the WSIB increased storage capacity by 300 percent, and it was able to undergo the transition without minimum disruption to mission critical applications.

> "In its move to a more efficient storage management model, the WSIB found that handling its large amounts of documentation did not have to be as challenging as first believed," Stavropoulos says. "FlexITy was glad to help develop a strategy that could help this organization better serve the people of Ontario."

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