Danone standardises on IBM storage for the UK and Ireland

Building a manageable, cost-effective and energy-efficient virtualised storage hub with IBM and Transputec

DANONE

Overview

Business challenge

Danone had built and inherited a variety of different storage solutions at five data centres across the UK and Ireland. The company saw an opportunity to significantly reduce costs and simplify management by standardising on a single storage platform.

Solution

Danone's UK team worked with Transputec, an IBM Premier Business Partner, to design and deploy a new virtualised storage area network based on IBM SAN Volume Controller, IBM System Storage DS5020 disk systems and TS3310 tape libraries, and IBM Tivoli Storage Manager. The solution virtualises new and existing disk storage systems, enabling the company to pool its resources and make more efficient use of storage capacity.

The Danone Group operates in four major markets: fresh dairy products, waters, baby nutrition and medical nutrition. In the UK and Ireland, these four business units are represented by group subsidiaries, located at five main sites.

"Historically, each of the subsidiaries had built up its own IT infrastructure," explains Irek Zielinski, IT Manager for Danone UK and Ireland. "However, in 2007, when Danone acquired Royal Numico, the group decided on a new, more integrated approach to IT. Each region would have an IT hub that provides a standardised infrastructure to all regional business units. For the UK and Ireland hub, one of the top priorities in meeting this objective was to redesign the storage landscape."

A heterogeneous storage landscape

The existing storage infrastructure was based on SAN hardware from several different vendors and located at five different data centres, which made it difficult for the new IT hub to manage efficiently. Moreover, the hardware at one of the data centres was reaching the end of its four-year renewal cycle, so the IT team needed to decide on a replacement quickly.

"At corporate level, Danone has nominated IBM as its preferred hardware supplier," comments Irek Zielinski. "And within our team at the UK and Ireland hub, we have many years' experience with IBM servers and storage, so we were confident that an IBM solution would be the right option for us. The next step was to find a partner that could help us design a solution suitable for the size and requirements of our business. That's where Transputec came in."

Finding the right partner

Transputec is an IBM Premier Business Partner that specialises in providing end-to-end infrastructure solutions for both mid-sized and large companies. With long experience and deep expertise across a wide range of industry verticals, Transputec delivers the right combination of servers, storage, software and services to enable clients to meet their business objectives.

Business Benefits

- Reduces the complexity of the storage environment and simplifies supplier management, potentially delivering seven-figure cost savings over three years.
- Simplifies storage management for all SANs within the main data centre, and will ultimately provide a single point of control for all five Danone data centres in the UK and Ireland.
- Supports faster, more dynamic allocation of storage resources, enhancing business agility.
- Enables re-use of older systems as tier two and three storage, avoiding additional hardware investments.
- Delivers more than 30 percent greater energy efficiency within a more compact physical footprint, saving data centre space and cutting electricity costs.

"For the UK and Ireland organisation, we needed a solution that would meet a mid-range budget while still delivering enterprise-level flexibility and performance," says Irek Zielinski.

Thinking outside the box

"When we put out a request for proposals, most of the respondents suggested traditional storage solutions," continues Irek Zielinski. "These might have delivered the capacity we needed, but wouldn't have given us more flexibility or ease of management. Transputec was the only one to think outside the box and recommend IBM storage virtualization technologies."

The Transputec proposal centred around an IBM virtualised disk solution – a combination of IBM SAN Volume Controller and IBM System Storage DS5020 disk systems that gives companies everything they need to get started with storage virtualisation. Transputec also recommended installing a pair of IBM System Storage TS3310 tape libraries, and using IBM Tivoli Storage Manager to optimise tape backup and restore processes.

"The great advantage of Transputec's proposal was that it would immediately simplify storage procurement and maintenance," comments Irek Zielinski. "Instead of multiple vendors with different technologies and maintenance contracts, we would have one company – IBM – supplying all the hardware and software, and one company helping us with implementation and support. This would help us save significant costs over the medium to long term."

Rapid results

The Danone UK and Ireland team decided to go ahead with an initial implementation to replace the aging HP EVA SAN at its data centre in Ealing. The new solution uses a combination of fibre channel and SATA disks to provide the optimum combination of price and performance: business-critical applications use the fast fibre channel disks, while the SATA drives are used for cost-effective file storage and smaller applications.

"So far we have seen very encouraging results in terms of performance, and the new hardware is also much more compact and over 30 percent more energy-efficient than our previous equipment," says Irek Zielinski. "In addition, since the whole landscape is virtualised, we can actually make full use of the capacity – we're not stuck with pockets of space trapped in different silos. Looking at the solution overall, we get better performance and more capacity within a smaller physical footprint with lower electricity costs. So it's an upgrade in every respect."

Solution Components

Software

- IBM® SAN Volume Controller
- IBM Tivoli® Storage Manager

Servers

- IBM System Storage® DS5020
- IBM System Storage TS3310

IBM Business Partner

- Transputec

"This solution from IBM and Transputec provides an excellent foundation for the future growth of our operations in UK and Ireland, and is a key component in aligning our operations with Danone Group's corporate IT strategy."

— Irek Zielinski, IT Manager for Danone UK and Ireland

Looking to the future

He adds: "The exciting part of the project, however, is the next phase. IBM SAN Volume Controller can be used to virtualise all kinds of storage systems – even if they are not from IBM. When we have implemented it at our other four data centres, it will provide a fully standardised central point of control for all the UK and Ireland SAN landscapes. This will greatly reduce storage management workload and help us improve business agility, without necessarily requiring much additional investment in new storage hardware. At the very least, we will be able to reassign our existing storage systems for tier two and three storage, and just purchase some new IBM hardware to handle tier one applications."

Significant return on investment

Once the rollout to the remaining sites is complete, Danone expects to see significant return on investment over the next three years.

"Above all, this solution from IBM and Transputec provides an excellent foundation for the future growth of our operations in UK and Ireland, and is a key component in aligning our operations with Danone Group's corporate IT strategy. By moving from decentralised infrastructures to a more coherent and standardised IT hub concept, we will be able to deliver more and better IT services with greater flexibility and at significantly less cost."

About Transputec

Founded in 1984, Transputec combines excellence in insights, relationships and innovations to drive businesses forward. Transputec manages IT services, develops tailor-made solutions, and supplies hardware and software to international clients in a diverse range of sectors, including commerce, finance, communications, construction, logistics and government.

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PO Box 41
North Harbour
Portsmouth
Hampshire
PO6 3AU

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