

Case Study



Top accountancy practice implement Virtualised Storage solution to save costs and reduce risk.

“ANS Group has provided up with an extremely cost effective solution, allowing us to effectively utilise our hardware and reduce our power costs. Most importantly it has also made all of our business critical applications and data highly available in the event of a server failure or disaster, potentially saving us money and our reputation with customers.”

Jackie Gargan, IT Manager, Beever and Struthers

Company Background

Beever and Struthers, Chartered Accountants, has been providing advice, support and a complete range of accounting services to clients for over 100 years. The Firm is now ranked amongst the top independent accountancy practices within the North West of England and has 18 partners and over 160 employees spanning three offices, two in Manchester, one of which is the head office and one in London.

The Challenge

Beever and Struthers had traditionally deployed dedicated application servers whenever they needed to deliver an application to users. Their environment is made up of a mixture of Windows and Novell servers with internal storage, memory and processing power. The issue with this set-up is that their hardware remained largely under-utilised, with investments in processors, disk space and memory going to waste.

Beever and Struthers business also relies on server availability at key points in the month when key applications such as payroll are relied on to meet customer SLA's. With the infrastructure set up as it was there were dangers around single points of failure with hardware which potentially could set back processes by hours or even days. The impact of this to the business would be one of financial penalty and damaged reputation with customers. The challenge that faced Beever and Struthers is how do they improve the flexibility of the environment and ensure that the system is resilient as well.

The Solution

Beevers and Struthers engaged the services of their trusted partner, ANS Group, to help advise where they could make efficiencies and realise some of their goals for the infrastructure. The proposed solution sought to reduce downtime of servers due to hardware failure, consolidate the number of physical servers in use and provide a fast an efficient way of recovering servers and data in the event of a disaster.

The server estate was virtualised using VMware Virtual Infrastructure Enterprise edition which brought the total number of physical servers down dramatically. This would present some power and cooling savings and also rack space, though the greater benefits to Beever and Struthers would come from the introduction of high availability.

To create a highly available environment within VMware a storage area network (SAN) would need to be

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implemented. Dell EqualLogic was chosen as its feature rich iSCSI design gave the best price performance on the array, SAN fabric and replication software to suit Beever and Struthers needs now and as they grow. The array is fully fault tolerant and designed to work with VMware providing transactional snap-shots, fast recovery and replication over the WAN. As Dell EqualLogic is built on the principle of grid architecture the solution will grow in performance as more arrays are added to the group, therefore it will grow in performance as the company grows in size; a key consideration in designing the solution.

The final solution comprised a second EqualLogic array at a remote site on the WAN providing an offsite replica of production data, in the event of a site lost Beever and Struthers can connect to this data using VMware and restore servers to begin working again.

All of this technology is managed through a single interface for the servers and a single interface for the storage, from here Beever and Struthers can manage all data and servers, provision new servers and storage, enable maintenance during office hours and be more flexible and proactive with their IT infrastructure mapped to the business needs.

Business Benefits

The solution met Beever and Struthers initial objective to maximise server resilience to ensure continuity of their business critical applications. The solution also greatly exceeded their expectations due to the failover capabilities and data protection that VMWare offered. Beever and Struthers are now more agile as a business and have the capabilities to deliver more user services whilst minimising anymore capital outlay or expenditure on server hardware.

The benefits of the virtualised iSCSI SAN solution include:

- Increased resilience
- Maximised disk performance and utilisation
- Lower recovery point through Snap shots
- Money saved on powering and cooling the data centre
- Easily scalable
- Option to replicate to remote site
- Centrally managed
- Ease of deployment

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