Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Case Study

Gorkana a CISION company

Gorkana Group migrates mission-critical Oracle database to Nimble Storage

65 percent improvement in Oracle® Database performance and costs cut by 3.5x

Objective
Gorkana Group was experiencing performance degradation of its Oracle environment due to data growth

Approach
Evaluated several all-flash solutions, sought advice from trusted technology consulting provider, Krome Technologies, then conducted a three-month proof of concept on Nimble Storage arrays

IT Matters
- Increased Oracle Database performance by 60-65%
- Simplified storage management; Database Administrators (DBAs) no longer need to manage storage tiers
- Enabled storage tiering for additional flexibility and cost savings

Business Matters
- Achieved 3.5x reduction in IT operational costs
- Decreased query time from hours to minutes or seconds

Challenge

Addressing key challenges
London-based Gorkana Group provides media intelligence, accurate data and analysis, high-quality networking, and premium customer services to over 35,000 communications professionals around the world. Gorkana's many valuable services enable its clients to accurately plan campaigns, develop closer media relationships, analyze mainstream and social media coverage and effectively manage brand reputations.

Gorkana had been relying on a NetApp MetroCluster storage environment for several years. "Our business is growing very rapidly, nearly 10% year-over-year," notes Mark Just, head of IT operations for the Gorkana Group. "We had reached the point where we either had to increase capacity in our existing environment or switch to a different solution altogether. We decided to look for a storage solution that was easier to maintain, more scalable to keep up with the growth needs of our business, and also more cost effective."

Solution

Evaluating the alternatives
Just and his team conducted a very thorough evaluation of the storage alternatives. "We looked at NetApp, Dell, Whiptail, EMC, and several all-flash solutions. You name it, we looked at it. Cost was a big factor for us, but maintenance and support of the product were bigger concerns.

"Nimble Storage has more than lived up to our expectations. It absolutely meets our requirements for scalability, capacity and performance – and we aren't even 'stretching it' yet. From a support perspective, Nimble is absolutely stellar. We're very pleased with our choice of storage platform."

– Mark Just, head of IT operations, Gorkana Group

We wanted a product that could not only scale out, but easily scale up as well. Nimble Storage (a Hewlett Packard Enterprise company) met the requirement on ALL of our evaluation categories."

Whilst evaluating alternative solutions, Just also sought advice from Gorkana's trusted technology consulting services provider, Krome Technologies. "We always touch base with Krome, especially when making major changes to our IT environment," notes Just. "We trust their recommendations and feedback on technology. Krome agreed that the Nimble Storage platform would be a very good fit for our environment and that it should be a leading candidate in our evaluation."

Gorkana ran a three-month proof of concept (POC) on the Nimble Storage arrays. "Not only did the arrays perform beautifully, we were very impressed with the flexibility of Nimble's team," Just acknowledges. "Since the Nimble solution was new to us, we had a lot of questions about how it would integrate with our existing environment. The Nimble teams in the UK and the US went out of their way to help us, even with our extremely tight deadlines."

In addition to running its own evaluation of the Nimble arrays, Gorkana also enlisted the help of independent testing company Xynomix to verify the results of the POC. Comments in the Xynomix report included: "We conducted testing and on-site analysis of the Nimble arrays. The really amazing thing about this new storage is the sheer scalability of it, and the fact that response times barely moved when pushed hard. The maximum we saw was 1.5ms, which is astounding when you consider the Oracle Database load we were inducing at that point."

Gorkana made the decision to purchase two Nimble Storage Adaptive Flash Arrays for its mission-critical Oracle database environment, two Nimble arrays for the company file systems, and an additional Nimble array for other Gorkana services. "We gained a deep appreciation of the Nimble arrays during our evaluation and investigation phase," reports Just. "We knew we could use the Nimble arrays to increase both capacity and performance. With other storage vendors' solutions, we would have had to choose one or the other."

Customer at a glance

HPE solution
- Nimble Storage Adaptive Flash Arrays

Benefit

Increasing performance, cutting costs and enabling scalability

"We went right to the wire in terms of capacity and performance on the old NetApp MetroCluster," Just explains. "Our Oracle DBAs have performed a lot of storage migrations over the years. I asked them how quickly they could transfer everything to the Nimble platform without risking 'business as usual'. They said they needed 12 weeks, but I told them they only had five. And they did it! Our Oracle DBAs were absolutely astounded that they could migrate to Nimble in such a short period of time on a live production system, with zero errors. Overall, we pulled off an amazing migration from our old NetApp MetroCluster to the Nimble storage arrays in a very short timeframe!"

Migrating the Oracle database to Nimble has shifted the Oracle performance bottleneck from the storage to the servers. "From a perspective of throttling the system, now it's just a question of whether our HP Gen8 server blades can handle the requests being thrown at them, rather than the bottleneck being the database returns from storage. Achieving high performance in our Oracle environment is key to our success. The Nimble Storage platform is enabling us to take our business to the next level."

In addition to the performance improvements, Gorkana achieved 3.5x annual savings in its IT operational budget for storage by moving to the Nimble arrays. "IT costs are a big thing for us because we are an equity-owned business," says Just. "Not only were we able to cut our operational costs, Nimble also reduced our capital expense as well. Since we can now place all three tiers of storage on one Nimble hybrid-storage array, it's 20 percent cheaper than the other vendors' options. Our DBAs don't need to learn a separate set of skills for managing different tiers (tier 1, 2, 3) of storage like they would have with other storage solutions."

Gorkana also saved money by postponing its scheduled Oracle upgrade. "Anytime you upgrade Oracle, it requires additional licensing and massive costs," Just explains. "Due to the increased performance of the Nimble arrays, we were able to put our Oracle upgrade on hold for 18 months. Nimble gave us the extra legroom we needed to look at our IT roadmap from a strategic view, rather than a capacity–driven approach to growth.

"We operate in an environment that's consistently changing," Just concludes. "We need a storage environment that is equally flexible. Nimble has more than lived up to our expectations. It absolutely meets our requirements for scalability, capacity, and performance — and we aren't even 'stretching it' yet. And from a support perspective, Nimble is absolutely stellar. We're very pleased with our choice of storage platform."

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