SMITH BROTHERS OF BERNE

EMC VNXe unified storage enables manufacturing and customer service excellence

ESSENTIALS

Business Challenge

- Direct-attached storage did not provided needed performance and put company at risk

- Outage of ERP server could result in hours of lost production time and unhappy customers

- Lack of unified storage resulted in unreliable backup processes and long recovery windows

Solution

- EMC VNXe unified storage
- EMC Local Protection Suite
- VMware
- Microsoft SQL Server
- Microsoft SharePoint
- Microsoft Exchange

OVERVIEW

Smith Brothers of Berne, located in Berne, Indiana, prides itself on manufacturing and service excellence. Throughout its 85 year history, the company has built a solid reputation for the quality of its custom manufactured fine upholstered furniture. Fast delivery is also vital: the company strives to build and deliver custom orders within three weeks of customer purchase.

BUSINESS CHALLENGES

To drive its objectives, Smith Brothers depends heavily on an enterprise resource planning (ERP) solution to expedite lean manufacturing and sales processes. But the company's direct-attached storage systems needed to be replaced.

The systems, comprising 20 physical servers, did not provide the performance necessary to support the ERP system and other mission-critical virtualized applications and data—including related Microsoft SQL Server databases, Microsoft SharePoint, Domain controllers, Microsoft Exchange, and file servers—and often resulted in downtime. If one of the critical manufacturing servers failed, manufacturing would grind to a halt. In addition, backing up all 20 servers took hours and was difficult to manage. And with all servers located together and no separate disaster recovery (DR) site, the company was assuming considerable risk.

"If the ERP server crashed it meant that manufacturing staff could be standing around with nothing to do," explains Derek Augsburger, Smith Brothers of Berne network manager.

Augsburger estimates that a server crash could cost the company up to $25,000 per instance due to manufacturing downtime. Additionally, deliveries could be late resulting in disappointed customers.

"We had virtualized using VMware in order to increase performance within a direct-attached storage environment. But we needed something more to minimize downtime and support our commitment to excellence," states Augsburger.

SOLUTION

Smith Brothers approached EMC Partner, BSA Data Solutions, who recommended a unified storage solution. After considering a number of options, including Dell and HP platforms, Smith Brothers chose EMC® VNXe® unified storage.

"Our primary drivers for change were achieving high data availability, as well as the establishment of a DR capability and methods to simplify our backup and recovery

CUSTOMER PROFILE

processes—all with the objective of minimizing downtime," says Augsburger. "We went with EMC VNXe because it was a perfect fit for our needs."

Smith Brothers of Berne deployed VNXe and the EMC Local Protection Suite at its Indiana data center. It has successfully migrated 30 virtual machines and applications to the VNXe, and now enjoys high levels of data availability, performance, reliability, and ease of management. EMC Total Protection Suite also provides Smith Brothers of Berne with the ability to protect vital data through the EMC SnapView™, EMC SnapSure™, and EMC RecoverPoint/SE CDP.

"With VNXe, we now enjoy much higher levels of IOPS performance compared to our direct-attached systems," Augsburger states. "Jobs that used to take a few minutes are now only taking seconds."

EASY DEPLOYMENT AND MANAGEMENT

Upon purchasing the VNXe, Augsburger was somewhat worried about deployment due to his lack of experience with unified storage technologies. But using the EMC Unisphere® management system and its user-friendly 'wizards', Augsburger quickly self-configured the VNXe, allocated storage and IOPS, and migrated all data from the direct-attached storage systems.

"EMC has done a great job with the Unisphere interface," he states. "It's well laid out and easy to understand. We had our VNXe up and running in only four hours. This isn't rocket science. While you need some IT background, you don't have to be a storage specialist to deploy the VNXe. For that reason, I've already recommended it to four other businesses that have gone on to purchase it. They agree that the VNXe is easy to set up and configure."

ENABLING SUCCESSFUL BACKUP AND RECOVERY

Implementing VNXe has enabled Smith Brothers of Berne to implement a successful backup and recovery capability. The company can now successfully back up all four TB of data held on its VNXe to separate hosts—a much easier process to manage than backing up all 20 direct-attached servers. In addition, Smith Brothers of Berne now has a DR data center located about a mile from its primary data site.

"We'll break even quickly with EMC VNXe due to increased performance, efficiency, scalability, and our ability to prevent downtime. If we can avoid one instance of a four-hour production outage, the VNXe pays for itself almost immediately."

Derek Augsburger
Network Manager at Smith Brothers of Berne

"Before VNXe, it could take us hours to recover data in the event of an issue," says Augsburger. "Now downtime is measured in only minutes. And in the event of a disaster, we can quickly spin up copies of mission-critical virtual machines. Today, we no longer worry about disruption to our manufacturing because of the reliability provided by VNXe unified storage."

IMPROVED FLEXIBILITY AND AGILITY

VNXe and VMware provide Smith Brothers of Berne with much higher levels of flexibility and agility. The integrated solutions enable the company to minimize time to market by deploying new storage, and creating new VMs, almost instantly.

"We're currently deploying a new ERP system which has resulted in the need for more storage," Augsburger explains. "In the past we would have had to buy a new direct-attached storage system, wait for delivery, and configure it before we could get up and running. With VNXe, all I had to do was add the new chassis by sliding it into the rack, plug it in, configure it, and turn it on. It took only two hours to do this."

EASY VIRTUALIZATION OF MISSION-CRITICAL APPLICATIONS

VNXe and VMware also make supporting Smith Brothers of Berne's virtual environment and applications easy. Smith Brothers was able to see a 30 percent application performance improvement as a result of VNXe and VMware. The company's virtualization of Microsoft SharePoint provides a good example.

"SharePoint is critical for us because it facilitates collaboration among our staff," says Augsburger. "We were initially reluctant to virtualize SharePoint, but we talked to others that had done so and they put our minds at ease. Virtualizing SharePoint with VMware, all within the VNXe environment, was easy to do and works great. I understand other people's hesitancy to virtualize—we were reluctant too. But we've now virtualized all applications without any trouble. And with VNXe, we get excellent performance from these virtualized applications."

PARTNERS AND TECHNOLOGY FOR THE FUTURE

Augsburger anticipates that the VNXe will pay for itself in only months. "We'll break even quickly with EMC VNXe due to increased performance, efficiency, scalability, and our ability to prevent downtime. If we can avoid one instance of a four-hour production outage, the VNXe pays for itself almost immediately."

"We look at BSA as true partners because they recommend only what we need to meet our challenges, and have never tried to sell us something just for the sake of a sale," says Augsburger. "They've earned a high level of trust and we rely on them to help us to get the most out of our technologies."

He continues, "VNXe is easy to use and deploy, provides exceptional performance and reliability, and a fast ROI. I recommend VNXe to other small and mid-sized businesses because it's a logical, cost-effective step up from direct-attached storage, and contributes to our goal of manufacturing and customer service excellence."

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