

# BAKER TILLY

## EMC VNX2 provides storage horsepower for rapidly growing business



### ESSENTIALS

#### Industry

Financial services

#### Company Size

Headquarters in Chicago with 2,500 employees across the U.S.

#### Business Challenges

- Support business goals and help enable economies of scale and efficiencies quickly as business grows by acquisition

#### Results

- Enabled the company to manage continued growth by acquisition
- Provided support for both VMware vSphere and Microsoft Hyper-V from a single platform
- Improved performance and efficiency via automated storage tiering
- Provided comprehensive data replication to facilitate disaster recovery
- Reduced costs through replacement of tape backup systems

### SUPPORTING VIRTUALIZATION, IMPROVING PERFORMANCE

The IT team of Baker Tilly Virchow Krause (Baker Tilly), a nationally recognized, full-service accounting and advisory firm, focuses on two broad objectives: to enable maximum productivity for the business, and to drive this productivity with advanced technology. When Baker Tilly recently merged with another Baker Tilly International firm, ParenteBeard, these objectives were put to the test.

"We're here to support the strategic mission of the firm, which in the case of the merger involved expanding and strengthening our market presence in the Northeast corridor," explains Matt Jennings, Director of IT at Baker Tilly.

From an IT perspective, this meant that IT had to manage a great deal of transition with no disruption to the business—keeping systems operational and ensuring that data was secure and available. IT also had to support the broader business goals and help the firm realize the merger's economies of scale and efficiencies as quickly as possible. And it all had to look seamless to the market.

Previously, the company had relied on a mixed storage environment that included EMC® VNX® unified storage platforms as well as arrays from NetApp. But as the IT team worked to merge critical applications that drive the business—including the time and billing systems, general ledger, and email systems—it also needed to upgrade and consolidate its enterprise storage capabilities to support the merged applications.

To help realize the key business objectives of the merger, Baker Tilly consolidated on the new EMC VNX unified storage series (VNX2). As a result, the company can support both VMware® vSphere® and Microsoft Hyper-V, as well as its VDI implementation, with one storage system. In addition, the company has gained improved performance and increased capacity utilization without the need to manually tier storage—saving time and reducing operational costs. And IT is now in the position to continue to support acquisitions as they arise.

### ENVIRONMENT

Baker Tilly's all-EMC unified storage environment—anchored by VNX2 configured with the EMC FAST™ Suite—provides the primary storage for Baker Tilly's most critical business applications and data.

"For several years, we have relied on EMC as an important partner and provider of leading-edge storage solutions," Jennings notes. "The merger was a key driver for us to upgrade our storage environment, and it happened to coincide with EMC's launch of the VNX2 line. That's all the convincing we needed to decommission our remaining NetApp platforms and consolidate storage with EMC."

# REDEFINE

CUSTOMER PROFILE



## Solutions

- EMC VNX2 unified storage
- EMC FAST Suite
- VMware vSphere
- EMC Isilon
- EMC RecoverPoint
- EMC Data Domain
- Microsoft Hyper-V, Microsoft SQL Server, Microsoft Exchange, Citrix XenApp, STAR time and billing, Navision general ledger system

He adds that the consolidated EMC storage delivers efficiencies that weren't achievable in the mixed environment.

"We run a lean and mean IT operation without many resources to manage storage. One of the biggest reasons that we've always embraced EMC solutions is that they require fewer software upgrades and maintenance than NetApp—once we set the parameters, the arrays basically run themselves. The new VNX2 unified storage multiplies this benefit."

VNX arrays support Baker Tilly's new disaster recovery capabilities, the company's two data centers in Pennsylvania, virtualized datasets and applications from the previous ParenteBeard environment, and the company's larger New York City and Washington D.C. data centers. EMC RecoverPoint® provides replication, continuous data protection, and any-point-in-time recovery for the Pennsylvania data centers. In addition, for backup of Microsoft SQL Server and Microsoft Exchange, Baker Tilly has replaced its previous tape-based processes with an EMC Data Domain® disk-based deduplication backup system.

Baker Tilly also utilizes EMC Isilon® scale-out storage to provide production data storage for VMware vSphere.

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## SEAMLESS STORAGE FOR VIRTUALIZED APPLICATIONS

The Baker Tilly IT server infrastructure is now almost 100 percent virtualized. All business critical applications, including the STAR time and billing system and Navision general ledger system, operate on virtual machines powered by both VMware vSphere and Microsoft Hyper-V. Baker Tilly has also deployed a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) using Citrix XenApp. VNX2 enables the company to support both virtualization platforms via a single storage system.

"Since we are primarily a Microsoft shop, it's extremely important that our storage platforms be seamlessly compatible with both VMware and Hyper-V. Without EMC's fluency in both, we could not achieve effective virtualization," Jennings states. "It is uncommon to find a storage vendor that provides the flexibility and high availability that we need for both environments. This was another key reason for us to consolidate on VNX2."

## IMPROVING PERFORMANCE AND GAINING EFFICIENCY

Baker Tilly utilizes the EMC FAST Suite for fully automated storage tiering, enabling the company to automatically allocate storage resources according to the required workload and business requirements.

## Company Overview

Founded in 1931, Baker Tilly Virchow Krause (Baker Tilly) is a nationally recognized, full-service accounting and advisory firm. With approximately 2,500 specialized professionals across the U.S., Baker Tilly is ranked as one of the 12 largest accounting and advisory firms in the country. The company is based in Chicago and is an independent member of Baker Tilly International, a worldwide network of independent accounting and business advisory firms in 137 countries.

“The FAST Suite was a large selling point for us since day one and it’s even more powerful now with VNX2,” Jennings comments. “I don’t have the resources to assign someone to watch LUNs and move them to hotter storage when needed. FAST enables us to have multiple levels of storage within the array, and it provides the intelligence to watch hot spots and move the workload around as required with no intervention from our team.”

This feature is especially important to Baker Tilly at the end of the month, when it needs maximum performance from the STAR time and billing system.

## REDUCING BACKUP TIMES BY MORE THAN 60 PERCENT

By utilizing Data Domain for backup of SQL Server and Exchange, Baker Tilly has reduced its backup times from more than 24 hours to eight hours or less. It has also reduced costs by replacing its tape backup systems.

“The cost and unreliability of tape backup was a big driver for our adoption of Data Domain—and of course, it is one of the industry’s best deduplication systems,” Jennings says. “We’re totally reliant on the ability of Data Domain to ingest large amounts of data and then efficiently deduplicate and replicate the data to facilitate disaster recovery.”

## THE CONFIDENCE TO SAY YES

With its consolidated EMC storage environment, the Baker Tilly IT department is better equipped than ever to manage the company’s continued growth by acquisition.

“Every merger we’ve done with virtualization back-ended by VNX has been highly successful and easy for our team,” Jennings comments. “Holistically, a unified environment consisting of fewer arrays from the same manufacturer means a significant reduction in our administrative costs. Also, we know we can count on EMC to provide the high availability and serviceability we need, especially in tax season when any downtime can have a significant impact on the business.”

He concludes, “One of the challenges we face in landing new clients is the ability to say, with confidence, that we can meet their requirements. With EMC, we’re able to say ‘yes, we can protect your data and do it as cost efficiently as possible.’ As one of the premier storage manufacturers in the industry, EMC gives us the protection of solid, reliable, and field-tested technology.”

## CONTACT US

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