LEADING WITH TECHNOLOGY TO DRIVE BUSINESS GROWTH

Large bank achieves the performance, availability, and simplicity it needs to put ever larger volumes of data to work to improve customer experience.

Financial Services | Middle East

Business needs
A large bank needed new ways to process and protect ever-growing volumes of data. Rapid business growth led to problems with backup and end-of-day processing in branches. Increasing use of big data and analytics to innovate and improve customer experience fuels the need for even more speed, while ensuring continuous data protection and availability.

Solutions at a glance
- Dell EMC VMAX All Flash storage system
- Dell EMC Data Domain data protection
- Dell EMC RecoverPoint continuous data protection
- Dell EMC Consulting Services
- Dell EMC Support Services

Business results
- Reduced end-of-day processing time by 2+ hours
- Achieved cost-efficient data replication over distance with near-zero RPO
- Automated replication and continuous data protection simplifies operations, cuts costs
- Moving from disaster recovery to disaster avoidance with active-active data center solution

“We have been working with Dell EMC for 10 years now, and we take seriously any technical or digital transformation recommendations they give us for the bank.”

IT Executive
Established 40 years ago, this small local bank has grown into a large national bank and operates banking subsidiaries in five additional middle eastern countries as well as a worldwide network of branches.

The bank attributes its remarkable and profitable growth to shrewd strategies, talented employees, and state-of-the-art technology-enabled services.

“Our mission is to enable the best service for our customers,” says an IT executive. “We’ve always been technology-led. Whenever there is an issue or a new customer requirement, the first place that we look is in IT and ask how we can use technology to provide the solution.”

Fast-growing business, fast-growing data

About five years ago, rapid business growth led to problems with end-of-day processing in its branches. “As the size of data grew, so did the amount of time it took to process it. At many branches, the amount of data had grown so large that processing could not be completed overnight. We had to delay opening hours for customers. It was something we dealt with two or three times a week.”

Changing the core banking application wasn’t an option, so the team looked for a technical edge. They found what they were looking for with Dell EMC VMAX enterprise storage, which combined powerful solid-state drive technology with advanced services for ease of management.

“We cut at minimum two hours of processing time and solved our end-of-day processing issues just by replacing our storage with VMAX.”

More recently, the bank’s increasing use of big data and analytics to innovate and improve customer experience has fueled another exponential expansion of data, requiring even greater performance. To meet this demand, the team upgraded to the VMAX All Flash platform, which combines extremely dense flash drives with the simplicity of VMAX data services.

“With VMAX All Flash storage, we got even more speed, simplicity, and security. In addition, The VMAX non-disruptive migration enabled the bank to migrate workloads live to VMAX All Flash without taking the applications offline. We were able to complete the migration in four easy steps”.

Near-zero RPO

Large data volumes required the bank to take a new approach to backup and restore, as well. “Our backup was taking more than 24 hours to complete. Here again, we needed more speed, more power—as well as the assurance that all of our data can be restored.”

The bank wanted to copy data to a remote site in the UK, but was unable to do so with its existing backup and restore technologies. Working with Dell EMC, the team implemented an automated data backup and replication solution using Dell EMC Data Domain data protection storage and Dell EMC RecoverPoint continuous data protection technology.

“The other vendors we talked to said we needed to upgrade our data links, which would cost the bank a significant amount of money. The Dell EMC RecoverPoint solution enabled us to replicate our data to the UK without upgrading our data links. We were able to do this because RecoverPoint includes data compression technology. Now data is replicated automatically—and we have been able to achieve a near-zero recover point objective (RPO) between the Middle East and Europe, which is not something we expected to be able to do.”

Active-active data center strategy

Now the bank is looking at a data center relocation and transformation project that it hopes to complete over the next year.

“Dell EMC Services is helping us think about the best way to upscale our data center and migrate systems and data. Dell IT engineers shared their own experience with us, and our account team connected us to other companies to hear about their data center transformations. We learned, for example, that it was possible to migrate data with zero downtime, allowing users to keep working during the process. We have gained confidence about moving our own data center.”
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The Dell EMC Services team advised the bank to consider an active-active approach with its new data center—going beyond disaster recovery to disaster avoidance. “They questioned why we would spend a significant amount of money for a DR data center that sits idle. That’s a very expensive insurance policy.”

In an active-active data center scenario, both data centers do productive work, with each able to automatically take over for the other in the event of disaster. The approach is made possible by Dell EMC VPLEX virtual technology, which enables the same data to be read/write accessible across two storage systems at the same time. In addition to ensuring uptime for business-critical applications, the technology enables transparent data mobility across arrays, without any host disruption or planned downtime.

“This ability to avoid, rather than recover from, disaster—and the ability to fully capitalize on our IT investment in a second data center—has led us to decide to go with an active-active data center approach leveraging the Dell VPLEX solution between VMAX All Flash storage in both locations.” The solution will also enable the bank to migrate data seamlessly during data center relocation.

Like having a second IT team

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The bank also relies on Dell EMC Support Service for day-to-day support. “We have 24x7 support and we’re connected with their secure remote service. It’s good to know that they are monitoring our data center, even during the night. On many occasions, Dell EMC will get an alert and fix a problem before we know about it. Sometimes, we go in to work in the morning and find a replacement part has already been shipped and is waiting there for us.”

Currently, about 91 percent of the bank’s data center is virtualized with VMware, a strategically aligned business, under Dell Technologies. With the merger of Dell and EMC, the bank has been looking across the full range of Dell Technologies, to see how they can benefit the bank.
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