EBM converts 30 percent annual data growth into an asset rather than a burden with Dell EMC XtremIO

Business needs
EBM needed a solution to help it turn a growing mountain of data into valuable business insight that the company could use to enhance performance and drive growth.

Solutions at a glance
- Data Center
- Storage
- Dell EMC XtremIO
- Dell EMC Connectrix
- Dell EMC RecoverPoint

Business results
- 80% cut in management time boosts IT efficiency
- 4 times greater rack density reduces data-centre footprint
- 3:1 data deduplication ratio means lower hardware costs
- 12x better I/Os per second performance delivers business insight faster
We have transformed our IT with Dell EMC. We can quickly see how our business is performing and make smarter decisions.

Urs Trachsler, Team Leader — ICT Architecture, EBM

Companies today have access to mountains of data. Thanks to digitisation and developments in IT, they can collect and process operational data in close to real time, helping them benefit from up-to-the-minute business insight. But as EBM in Switzerland saw, without the right platform in place, the value of this mass of data can be lost.

EBM, which supplies renewable energy to households in north western Switzerland and the Alsace region of eastern France, ran its SAP enterprise resourcing planning (ERP) system on an ageing HP platform.

Multiple IT challenges

The organisation had grown significantly since the platform was implemented, acquiring several businesses and increasing its workforce. The infrastructure didn’t have the scalability or performance to support the SAP system and deliver the rapid level of insight that EBM wanted. What’s more, the HP solution had an extensive footprint and was time-consuming to manage. Says Urs Trachsler, team leader — ICT architecture, at EBM, “One of our primary goals was to reduce the size of our ICT infrastructure.”

Enabling continued expansion

EBM engaged with the Dell EMC XtremIO team, which proposed a high-performance all-flash solution with low latency to maximise processing speeds. It also provided simplified management, a modular design for easier scaling and a significantly smaller footprint than the technology from HP. Trachsler says, “When we looked at the Dell EMC solution built around XtremIO, we saw a way to turn our mountains of SAP data into something that would be valuable to EBM.”

Based on five years’ worth of projected data growth, EBM deployed Dell EMC XtremIO on a pair of mirrored 40-terabyte X-Bricks. As part of the design, the X-Bricks are linked via Dell EMC Connectrix switches to VMware ESX server clusters running the SAP ERP software. Finally, Dell EMC RecoverPoint appliances provide disaster recovery through data replication and instant recovery of data.
Supports 30 percent year-on-year data growth

Today, EBM is gaining value from its data thanks to the scale-out architecture underpinning its SAP environment. Even with data growth of 30 percent a year, EBM has the tools in place to store its SAP data securely and process it fast enough so executives can fine-tune operations. “Our data is no longer a burden — it’s now a tool through which we can drive growth,” says Urs Trachsler.

Faster business insight

EBM has gained a platform to help decision-makers work more efficiently. The company can put business data into the hands of executives much faster thanks to 12 times better I/Os per second (IOPS) performance of the all-flash Dell EMC solution. This is compared to a non-flash storage system from HP. “We have transformed our IT with Dell EMC. We can quickly see how our business is performing and make smarter decisions,” says Trachsler.

4 times greater rack density

EBM has also reduced the amount of hardware it supports. Trachsler comments, “We’ve cut our data-centre footprint drastically through the four times greater rack density of our Dell EMC XtremIO solution.”

Data compression means savings on hardware

As well as reducing its physical footprint, EBM has cut the amount of data it stores due to the inline deduplication and data compression technology in Dell EMC XtremIO. The company is achieving a 3:1 deduplication and compression ratio since the Dell EMC XtremIO solution was deployed. “The increase in our data is compensated by the deduplication and compression in our Dell EMC solution, helping us lower our storage costs,” says the customer.

Management time cut by 80%

IT personnel at EBM also find the Dell EMC solution easier to administer. “We have reduced management time by 80 percent,” says Urs Trachsler. “With Dell EMC XtremIO, there’s none of the complexity associated with traditional IT — no disk selection, RAID configuring or tiering. Our IT staff just provision and go,” says Trachsler.