

ARCADIA GROUP LTD

EMC next-generation backup and recovery solution replaces tape within an IBM i environment reducing backup and restore times and improving reliability



ESSENTIALS

Challenges

- Backup times were longer than 10 hours
- Poor data availability due to long backup times
- Restores took as long as 24 hours, hampering operations
- Inability to store data for long retention periods, compromising regulatory compliance

Solution

- EMC Data Domain for an IBM i environment

Results

- Elimination of problems associated with tape-based systems, including mechanical and tape failure, high storage costs, slow tape transport, and complex management
- Reduced data footprint due to a 92.2 percent data deduplication rate, enabling quick transmission for replication over IP bandwidth
- Reduced backup times—from more than 10 hours to four to six hours
- Faster restore times—from 24 hours+ to one hour
- Reduced TCO
- Ensured data security
- Full data availability during backups minimizes workflow disruption
- Ability to retain data for up to seven years, enabling regulatory compliance

ORGANISATIONAL OVERVIEW

The Arcadia Group, leaders in UK fashion retailing and design, owns some of the most dominant clothing retailers in the country, including TOPSHOP, TOPMAN, Burton, Evans, Dorothy Perkins, Miss Selfridge, Wallis, and BHS.

To successfully run its business, Arcadia Group relies on a suite of mission-critical applications, both internally developed and packaged solutions that run on two IBM Power Systems located at its datacentres in Milton Keynes and Cleckheaton. For example, the company's supply chain management application administers everything from garment purchasing to application processing.

Also, a polling system application continually polls the company's thousands of EPoS (electronic point of sale) tills located across the country, migrating critical financial, sales, and stock-on-hand data back to the company's datacentres. EPoS data is processed using in-house applications to provide everything from financial information, business intelligence, and garment orders, which are delivered to retailers to avoid out of stock scenarios. The company's 32 online e-commerce sites feed sales orders back to the datacentre, which in turn are made available to the company's distribution operations for 24-hour customer fulfillment.

With this heavy reliance on data, accurate and reliable data backup and restore capabilities are essential for Arcadia Group in order to ensure continuous business operations and customer loyalty.

Arcadia Group had been relying on a tape backup system managed by IBM Tivoli Storage Manager and BRMS to back up and protect its IBM i data. The company used two 1400+ tape IBM tape libraries to store the data.

Arcadia Group was experiencing a number of issues with the tape-based system. For example, the backup window for 24 TBs of critical data located at its two datacentres took more than 12 hours. Arcadia's users could not access critical data or applications during those long backup routines; and during backups, new data written to the servers was not available to the backup system, placing that data at risk. When the backup process was complete, this backlog of new data placed a heavy load on the next backup process.

In addition, because each day tapes were manually picked by van and transported to various storage locations, it could take a full day or more to locate the appropriate tape and have it returned to the right datacentre should a restore be required. Arcadia Group also recognised that responding to government audit was time-consuming and that long-term data retention on tape was inherently risky within its legal requirement to retain data for seven years.

"Our confidence in the system was deteriorating, as was the reliability of the backups," says Steve Hall, technology manager, Arcadia Group. "Because many of the tapes had to be stored in

secure external locations, the physical tape backup process was also time-consuming and costly. In short, if our data cannot be recovered, our business dies. We knew there had to be a better and more reliable backup method.”

“As an EMC customer for more than 10 years, we have built up trust in EMC technology. With our legacy IBM tape systems getting old and unreliable, we decided to analyse EMC’s backup and replication technologies to see if they could provide a better solution,” states Hall.

After evaluation, Arcadia Group chose EMC® Data Domain® deduplication storage solutions for next-generation backup and recovery to replace its IBM Tape Silo system. Two Data Domain systems are installed at Arcadia’s two datacentres. Data is passed to the Data Domain systems, which in turn provide daily, weekly, and bi-annual backup. Data is also replicated between the two Data Domain systems for increased redundancy. Arcadia has achieved a 92.2 percent deduplication rate to minimize its data footprint and to enable cost-effective replication over existing IP bandwidth.

SPEEDING BACKUP AND RECOVERY, MEETING RETENTION REQUIREMENTS

Using Data Domain instead of tape, Arcadia Group now enjoys the benefits of significantly reduced backup times, almost instant recovery times, and uninterrupted workflow during the backup process.

“Our backup windows for a total of 40 TBs of data is now between 30 minutes and 15 hours, depending on the IBM i partitions within our IBM Power Systems,” Hall states. “This is significantly better than with our legacy tape system. Because we no longer have data backlogs during our backup routines, all data is backed up, substantially improving data protection and security.”

Data Domain has also provided Arcadia Group with quick restores. “With Data Domain, restore times are rapid—less than an hour depending on the data set,” explains Hall. “Because we have removed the logistical challenges associated with tape, we are no longer concerned with where data is located—it’s all located on our Data Domain platforms. Even if data has to be relocated from a Data Domain in one datacentre to the other, we can quickly replicate that data from site to site to restore quickly.”

The large storage capacity of Data Domain now enables Arcadia Group to meet desired data retention requirements. Full System Daily backups are kept for 21 days, weekly backups for 28 days, and bi-annual backups for a full seven years.

“We can now be more confident that our set policies will allow us to meet regulatory retention requirements, such as tax compliance and import/export report submissions,” states Hall. “By eliminating tape from our IBM i environment on the IBM Power Systems platform, we have eliminated risks that may have prevented us going back a full seven years to access complete transaction histories. Data Domain provides us with the flexibility to meet our critical backup needs.”

COST-EFFECTIVENESS FOR LOW TCO

Arcadia Group’s decision to purchase Data Domain was in part driven by the solution’s low TCO. “Prior to the decision to purchase, we analysed the total cost of ownership by projecting Data Domain costs over a three-year period. We found that for a slightly smaller cost than our legacy tape solution, we would experience a wide range of new benefits while avoiding the challenges that we had with our tape systems,” says Hall.

“Data Domain enables us to save money and also simplify our backup and restore operations by removing physical tape media and its inefficiencies—broken tapes or the need to call out the van to find and deliver tapes. Data Domain just works. And end users of our IT systems don’t complain about the time it takes to complete a restore. That’s a good indication of how successful Data Domain is for our company.”

BENEFITS FOR CUSTOMERS USING IBM I ON AN IBM POWER SYSTEMS PLATFORM

Having experienced the benefits of EMC Data Domain, Hall states, “Our backup process used to be complex. EMC Data Domain has made it simple. I absolutely recommend EMC Data Domain to other customers with an IBMi environment on an IBM Power Systems platform. Data Domain has completely removed the challenges of a physical tape environment. It has improved our backup and restore times. It allows us to confidently meet data retention periods. And it achieves these benefits cost effectively. We have confidence in the long-term integrity of EMC Data Domain and trust it to meet our backup and replication requirements.”

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STEVE HALL
IT MANAGER, ARCADIA GROUP LTD

CONTACT US

To learn more about how EMC products, services, and solutions can help solve your business and IT challenges, contact your local EMC representative or authorized reseller—or visit www.EMC.com.

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