Case Study
Oskar Böttcher GmbH & Co. KG (OBETA)

"With our new Storage Cluster formed of two FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS DX200, we're in a much safer position than we were before. The machines not only meet our high requirements in terms of reliability and stability, they also provide better performance than our previous system and are less expensive to maintain."

Christian Becker, IT Hardware + Service Manager, Oskar Böttcher GmbH & Co. KG (OBETA)

The customer

Country: Germany
Industry: Electrical and installation equipment wholesaler
Founded: 1901
Employees: over 700
Website: www.obeta.de

The challenge

In order to achieve a high level of reliability and stability for its IT systems, Oskar Böttcher GmbH & Co. KG (OBETA) operates two fully redundant data centers. This means that all of its data is stored and accessible in both centers at all times. When the company decided to look for a new disk storage solution, its main requirement was a synchronous, automated data mirroring feature with the option to switch seamlessly between the two storage systems at any time. The new solution would also have to work with PAN Manager for FUJITSU Server PRIMERGY, the software OBETA had been using to monitor and orchestrate its IT infrastructure since 2008.

The solution

Replacing the previous system with a FUJITSU Storage Cluster comprising two ETERNUS DX200 disk storage systems with transparent failover and Intel® Xeon® processors.

The customer

Oskar Böttcher GmbH & Co. KG (OBETA) is a leading regional wholesaler of electrical and installation equipment. Between the company itself and its subsidiaries, OBETA employs over 700 people at 60 different sites in the German states of Berlin, Brandenburg, Saxony-Anhalt, Mecklenburg-Western Pomerania, Saxony, Thuringia, Hamburg, North Rhine-Westphalia and Bavaria. OBETA's many years of experience have helped it to develop an excellent professional reputation. And its commitment to providing outstanding customer service has made it a reliable partner for the electrical trade in Germany. OBETA is a member of a number of professional associations, including the Bundesverband des Elektro-Großhandels (VEG) e.V. (Federal Association of Electrical Wholesalers).

The challenge

After two complete failures of the disk storage systems in the OBETA data centers, IT Manager Christian Becker decided that it would be best to source its next solution from a different provider. However, any new disk storage system would have to be able to meet OBETA's demanding requirements in terms of reliability. The provider would also have to ensure that the system could be supported via the company's existing PAN Manager environment.

The solution

Finding a disk storage system that met the electronics wholesaler's strict requirements proved to be fairly difficult. "We began by testing two competitors to our existing system, but neither of them were suitable as the providers couldn't guarantee that we would be able to use the PAN Manager environment to support them," says Becker.

It was at this point that Becker discovered the new Storage Cluster functionality provided by the transparent failover feature in the FUJITSU ETERNUS DX systems. He was skeptical at first: "We asked ourselves if we really wanted to trust that the first generation of a product would be stable enough for us to rely on it for our production processes." But after learning more about a customer who had already installed the solution, he was convinced. Becker received advice and support from the Berlin branch of the Fujitsu SELECT Expert Partner SHD System-Haus-Dresden GmbH.

The benefit

- Lower investment, maintenance and licensing costs
- High reliability
- Increased performance over the previous system
- Integration into the existing IT infrastructure management system
- Fast, competent support from a single service provider
- High degree of flexibility

Products and services

- FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS DX200
- FUJITSU ETERNUS SF storage management software
- FUJITSU Server PRIMERGY

The new Storage Cluster comprises two ETERNUS DX200 devices from FUJITSU, each storing approximately 40 TB of application data. This covers everything from the backups of the company's workstation computers to the database containing access data for its online shop. The two disk systems are mirrored synchronously. "It provides the high level of reliability OBETA needs as the cluster is split across two separate fire zones," says Manuel Tavares, IT Architect and Business Developer for Data Centers at Fujitsu. If an error occurs in one area, the corresponding storage area in the second system switches on immediately so that the applications continue running seamlessly. This ensures that the 60 OBETA offices (whose IT systems are operated from a central location in Berlin) remain operational around the clock. The FUJITSU Storage Cluster is also comparatively easier to manage as many of its administration functions are automated.

The benefit

"The FUJITSU Storage Cluster not only fits in well with our existing environment, the machines are also much faster than those in our previous system," explains Becker. An additional benefit is that they are licensed by system rather than the standard method used by other providers which involves recalculating the costs each time the capacity is expanded. OBETA is also now spending less on maintenance than it was with its previous system or would have had to with the competing products it tested, as the FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS DX200 devices can support more and larger hard drives.

The FUJITSU ETERNUS DX200 disk storage system also provides greater flexibility and simplifies many administration processes. This is largely due to its thin provisioning feature, where individual application servers are assigned more virtual storage than is actually physically available.

"This means that we can react flexibly to the growth of our systems, and don't have to constantly worry about enlarging or reducing the amount of storage available," explains Becker.

Another benefit Becker praises is the storage tiering function, which links together different storage media that run at different speeds. The machine decides which data should be stored on which media automatically. Data that is accessed frequently, for example, is stored on fast SSDs. In OBETA's case, this includes the databases which contain the user data for its online store. The majority of the application data is stored on standard SAS drives.

Although OBETA's data volumes are comparatively small at the moment, Becker sees the homogeneous architecture of the ETERNUS DX family as another key advantage of the Fujitsu solution. It would be very easy for the company to move to a larger system – no additional training would be required as the ETERNUS DX components are all managed in the same way. The company would also have the option to replace just one of the two systems in the cluster – e.g. the failover system – with a larger one.

According to Becker, the main advantage of the Fujitsu solution for OBETA is that the PAN Manager support and support for the storage landscape come from a single supplier.

Conclusion

"The FUJITSU Storage Cluster mirrors our data so that it is all stored in both of our data centers at all times, meaning that our applications are always up and running. It also provides a comprehensive range of additional functions and features such as thin provisioning and automatic storage tiering – all for less than we were paying before."

Christian Becker, IT Hardware + Service Manager, Oskar Böttcher GmbH & Co. KG (OBETA)

More information: http://www.fujitsu.de/ETERNUS_DX

Made in Germany

In collaboration with

SHD.

Kontakt
FUJITSU Germany
E-Mail: cic@ts.fujitsu.com
Website: www.fujitsu.com/de
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