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Ryan Heseltine
Solutions Architect
Ongo



Ongo has deployed a scalable Fujitsu All-Flash storage solution to support 450 users and 15,000 tenants, leading to a 20-fold increase in performance.

At a glance

Country: United Kingdom
Industry: Social housing
Founded: 2007
Website: ongo.co.uk

Challenge

Ongo’s ageing collection of storage systems was suffering from poor performance and limited capacity. As a result, applications were slow, leading to low employee productivity. It wanted to find a cost-effective storage solution that would provide scalability and increased performance.

Solution

Working with IT specialist Central Networks, Ongo deployed a Fujitsu All-Flash storage solution. Over the course of just one week, 70 virtual machines were seamlessly migrated, covering core business functions such as document management, mobile applications, the tenant self-service portal and other business applications.

Benefit

- Application performance has increased 20-fold, boosting user productivity
- Market-leading reliability has ensured zero downtime over six months
- The Fujitsu storage platform can scale easily as demand grows
- Simple administration saves Ongo 40 man-hours per week
- More time spent working on business efficiency rather than reactive tasks



Customer

Ongo provides 10,000 homes for people on social or affordable rent primarily in North Lincolnshire. Along with homes to rent, it also provides a wide range of property management and maintenance services, plus support services to help tenants live successfully and independently within their home. It is a not-for-profit organisation, committed to its promise: 'everything we do is reinvested back into local communities'.

Products and Services

- FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS AF250 All-Flash Array using 10Gb iSCSI

Refreshing an ageing storage infrastructure

Ongo was using a combination of three storage platforms to support business operations and Citrix desktops, two of which were fibre-based. However, the joint lack of capacity across these solutions had led to a pronounced decrease in application performance.

"The storage dropped off a cliff in terms of performance with significant latency issues on our virtual machines. At the same time, the lack of capacity meant we had to be very conservative with provisioning," explains Ryan Heseltine, Solutions Architect, Ongo. "Clearing down old files and troubleshooting issues caused by high disk latencies was taking up a lot of our time and causing some performance issues for our customers."

In addition, the storage platforms were reaching end of life and would no longer have software support. The company needed a new approach to storage.

"We engaged a number of suppliers, including Central Networks, and asked them to propose what the solutions would look like and what it would cost based on our needs. Out of six responses, we took four to demo stage," adds Heseltine. "Some were ruled out based on cost, others because they were not All-Flash. Compatibility with 10 Gigabit iSCSI networks was also a key differentiator in the proposals."

Fujitsu was the only vendor that could provide a cost-effective, high-performing All-Flash solution. The fact that Ongo was already using a FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS DX100 for disaster recovery meant the IT team was already familiar with its approach to storage.

A fast, seamless migration

Working with housing association specialist Central Networks, Ongo deployed a FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS AF250 All-Flash Array using 10Gb iSCSI, which enables network convergence. This is an incredibly fast and flexible All-Flash storage system for the next generation data centre. At an affordable price point, it makes flash the new normal for all tier-one applications and is built to be smart, with easily configurable automated quality of service.

"The migration process was relatively straightforward because we host a virtual environment. We began with a couple of test virtual machines to prove stability and then rolled it out company-wide," continues Heseltine. "In total, it took one week to transition to the new storage platform with no downtime along the way."



The Fujitsu storage device supports around 70 virtual machines covering Ongo's entire infrastructure, including document management, mobile applications, the tenant self-service portal and other business applications. Ongo directly employs 450 people, including tradesmen, who use the mobile app to update records, while the tenant portal has 2,000 registered users.

"Our whole estate depends on this storage capacity, so to have such a seamless transition without disrupting our users or tenants was a big plus," says Heseltine. "As a result of this success, we are now looking at adding our Citrix VDI infrastructure, comprising of 60 virtual machines to the Fujitsu storage platform."

High-performing scalability

Ongo now enjoys significantly increased performance – up to 20 times faster than previously possible. The read latency on the virtual machines has decreased from 200ms to less than 1ms so reports that once took over five minutes to produce are now available within seconds.

"The performance has markedly improved with instant responsiveness, which makes our users more effective," comments Heseltine. "Furthermore, backups are much quicker and less prone to failure. That makes my team's life easier."

Another aspect that reduces the burden on Heseltine and his team is the ease of management and the overall reliability. In six months, he has not logged a single ticket and, should there be an issue, the company is covered by Fujitsu's next day break/fix support.

"It is essentially a zero-touch management platform, which has made us realise just how much time we had been spending on administration with the previous solutions," remarks Heseltine. "We are saving 40 man-hours per week through not having to firefight incidents. That is time that can be refocused more strategically within the company."

Ongo is also able to scale the Fujitsu storage solution as demand grows. Although its current capacity is 14TB, there is practically endless scope for expansion as and when the need arises. It will also, in due course, integrate seamlessly with the existing Fujitsu disaster recovery platform and enable network convergence by using 10Gb iSCSI.

"It is a storage solution that simply works – I haven't needed to log into the management console once except for a training handover," concludes Heseltine. "That simplicity reduces the load on my team and allows us to be more proactive in other areas."

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