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Francois Balaa
Head of IT
BBAC



BBAC deploys Fujitsu ETERNUS All-Flash storage to increase application performance times, making users more productive and customers happier.

At a glance

Country: Lebanon
Industry: Financial Services
Founded: 1956
Website: bbacbank.com

Challenge

When its existing storage platform reached end of life, BBAC wanted to radically transform its approach to storage by deploying an All-Flash environment. However, achieving this within a tight budget was a challenge.

Solution

BBAC worked with local partner Computel to deploy Fujitsu storage with high availability (transparent failover with storage cluster), backup and data management, and disaster recovery for business continuity with replications in three data centers. This now supports all the bank’s key financial applications with built-in backup and replication in a virtualized environment.

Benefit

- Application performance is ten times faster
- Improved user and customer experience
- Integrated backup and disaster recovery ensures optimal availability
- Power consumption has decreased by 30 percent, reducing costs
- The system can scale flexibly to meet future needs

Customer

BBAC is one of the top 10 banks in Lebanon. It provides a full range of banking and financial solutions to individuals and corporations through an extensive network of sixty-seven ATMs and forty-two branches; including three international branches, one in Limassol, Cyprus and two in Erbil and Baghdad, Iraq. In addition, it has a representative office in the United Arab Emirates. By the end of 2015, BBAC had a total workforce of 823 employees.

Products and services

- FUJITSU Server PRIMERGY Scale out systems (CX2550 & CX2570, distributed in 3 CX400 racks over 3 sites)
- FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS All-Flash Arrays: AF650 and AF250
- FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS CS200c Integrated Backup Appliance with Commvault software

Transforming the data center

When BBAC's primary storage platform began nearing end of life, the company was keen to take the opportunity to deliver a massive upgrade in terms of performance and speed. It wanted to enable digital transformation through the introduction of an All-Flash data center.

The principal challenge was to implement an All-Flash solution cost-effectively. The attraction of All-Flash memory is that it is more efficient, faster and more reliable, enabling better customer service. However, the main concern is that it is significantly more expensive than traditional hard drives.

"The platform supports all our key banking applications so speed and security are of the essence. We invited market leaders to propose a solution and carefully considered the responses," explains Francois Balaa, Head of IT, BBAC. "We were already using Fujitsu servers and storage outside core banking and had been impressed by their reliability. It also offered the simplest, most elegant solution within our budget.

"Fujitsu's proposal was less complex than the competition, featuring one consolidated All-Flash storage cluster," adds Francois. "It also boasted native integration with the Commvault software we had already purchased. This simplicity helps drive costs down."

Simple to deploy, integrate and migrate

BBAC has deployed a virtualization and private cloud reference architecture that integrates the expertise and technologies of leading manufacturers. It offers a simple concept with highly scalable industry-standard components including storage, networking and virtualization software, all running on Fujitsu PRIMERGY servers. All these components are synchronized and validated as a single solution. The integrated backup appliance, ETERNUS CS200c powered by Commvault, completes this approach as a pre-loaded, pre-configured backup solution.

The solution is based on Fujitsu PRIMERGY servers as well as Fujitsu ETERNUS All-Flash storage. The PRIMERGY CX400 is focused on providing massive scale-out power while at the same time delivering best economics for server density, energy consumption, heat optimization and lower overall operational costs. The ETERNUS AF250 is the ideal choice for BBAC's demanding data and performance requirements. The system delivers impressive IOPS performance with lowest latency even at full load.

The ETERNUS AF650 delivers leading storage performance and automated quality of service management enabling maximum system utilization and contributing to a fast ROI. The solution provides deep hypervisor integration, a rich life-cycle management, policy-based auto-protection ensuring no virtual machine goes unprotected.

"We phased the deployment, first implementing the Fujitsu storage layer, then integrating the backup with FUJITSU Storage ETERNUS CS200c and Commvault software, before preparing for go-live," continues Francois. "It was a relatively straightforward project that only took a month to fully roll out, working closely with local partner Computel and a dedicated Fujitsu engineer."

BBAC is now in the process of migrating everything except core banking applications to the new platform.

Improved performance and faster response times

The new Fujitsu platform is estimated to run up to ten times faster than the previous solution, meaning customers get much quicker responses. This, in turn, makes them happier and reduces churn. The increase in speed also makes employees more productive and less frustrated.

"It speeds transaction time, avoiding queues and hold-ups that can annoy customers," says Francois. "It also makes our workforce more effective."

In addition, Francois expects energy bills to decrease by around 30 percent because All-Flash storage consumes much less electricity. That's money that can be re-invested in new solutions or put towards increasing the ROI on this project. Moreover, the Fujitsu solution is incredibly reliable and scalable to meet future needs.

"This new platform will support our business for at least four years as we can easily extend it as and when we need to," comments Francois. "It also speeds time-to-market for new services as it is easier to implement new applications within an All-Flash environment."

BBAC is now enjoying a faster, more robust and more flexible storage environment, courtesy of Fujitsu. Now it is setting its sights on other areas of the business where it might again partner with the company.

"We are looking at extending our deployment of VMware Horizon to support more VDI users, which Fujitsu is involved in," concludes Francois. "It's an international company with a local touch and we have been very satisfied by the excellent customer support."

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Website: ae.fujitsu.com