Case study

HP 3PAR StoreServ storage solutions energize Just Energy

Just Energy saves over half a million annually with 3PAR StoreServ solutions

Industry
Energy utility

Objective
Increase storage capacity, performance, efficiency, availability, and management to save money, improve competitive advantage, and streamline ability to bring new products to market more quickly

Approach
Implement HP 3PAR StoreServ storage solutions to replace a disparate system of storage arrays and deploy a unified and centralized 3PAR StoreServ virtualized architecture

IT matters
• Ensures high availability

• Ease of management through unified storage console

• Development staff can quickly spin up a terabyte development environment without IT involvement increasing development time and freeing up IT staff for other tasks

• Increased productivity through automation

Business matters
• $0.5 million annual savings in reduced storage costs

• Significant savings due to 300% more storage capacity

• Advanced HP 3PAR StoreServ technology provides competitive advantage

• Fourfold increase in efficiency

• $1.2 million savings in reporting software

• Reduced support costs due to efficiency of standard support

> **"The fact that we save half a million annually over our previous purchasing model due to HP's unique 3PAR StoreServ tiering functionality justifies our investment. When added together, the combined benefit of the 3PAR StoreServ technology adds up to many increased efficiencies which translate directly into a significant competitive advantage in our fast-paced utility market."**
>
> – Eskander Mirza, manager Technology Services, Just Energy

Established in 1997, Just Energy is a competitive retailer of natural gas and electricity. Due to a disparate collection of aging storage systems, in 2011 several outages were experienced with substantial monetary impact. This sparked the call for a new unified, high performance solution. Since implementing virtual HP 3PAR StoreServ storage, the company is realizing significant savings and increased efficiencies, which translate directly into competitive advantage and improved customer service.

Just Energy implements technology advantage with 3PAR StoreServ storage

With offices located across the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom, Just Energy serves close to two million residential and commercial customers through a wide range of energy programs and home comfort services. The retail utility industry is highly competitive and, to ensure a market advantage, Eskander Mirza, manager Technology Services, Just Energy, and the IT staff underwent a very exacting evaluation of the major storage solutions on the market. The intent was to, not only establish a best-practice storage system, but to implement a competitive technology advantage with a superior and forward-looking storage vendor.

"We considered the major storage vendors in depth, and discovered that the HP 3PAR StoreServ numbers added up best," says Mirza. "It was a good fit financially and the unique HP 3PAR StoreServ auto-tiering capabilities allow us to automatically tier data to multiple assets in a way that is far ahead of the competing technologies. Our investment in the HP Converged Infrastructure solution, comprised of storage, servers, and networking, proved to be the right choice."

3PAR StoreServ storage becomes part of the solution

Just Energy accumulates multiple terabytes of customer data annually, related to billing processes and utility partners across North America and Europe, data which must be stored for regulatory compliance and to meet business and operational requirements. Mirza set out to modernize the company's storage architecture, reduce sky-rocketing data storage costs, and gain the ability to access the data to gather useful marketing information and analytics. The object was to enable the business to increase sales and define and predict trends of when best to buy, trade, and sell energy. The company also needed to be responsive and agile, due to the nature of the volatile commodity market, in order to quickly develop new products, modify offerings, and make timely changes to internal corporate systems.

"The ability to be responsive really translates back into the development cycle time and

efficiency of our large development teams," notes Mirza. "If these teams have to wait days and days for their storage infrastructure or the data on their development machines to be refreshed, that's not acceptable. With HP 3PAR StoreServ, the infrastructure is on our side, easy to spin up with snapshots, and the development environment is ready to go when they are."

In addition to providing the speed and to increase the efficiency of the crucial Just Energy development team, Mirza points out several other aspects of the HP 3PAR StoreServ storage solution, which are providing significant value and savings.

"The virtualized 3PAR StoreServ Storage platform also includes excellent reporting, another important feature that the other platforms we evaluated couldn't match," continues Mirza. "It tells us what storage is going where, how it's performing, and where any bottlenecks are located, all with an easy user interface. In order to even approximate this with our previous storage farm, it would have cost us over $1.2 million in software, money we save with 3PAR reporting."

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While on the subject of saving, Mirza emphasizes how the 3PAR StoreServ tiering functionality, which also stood out over the other solutions, saves an additional half a million annually.

"With unstructured data, you don't really know what you have, or even the access and throughput it's going to have", he explains. "Previously, we had to store huge amounts of archived data on expensive disks, which is really a waste of business capital. 3PAR StoreServ enables us, through its more advanced tiering capabilities, to automatically move our unclassified data into cheaper tiers of disks. This cut our cost of disk in half, saving us an estimated half a million annually, while increasing performance."

Customer at a glance

Application

Utilize new unified and centralized HP 3PAR StoreServ architecture to better serve approximately two million residential and commercial customers through a wide range of energy programs and home comfort services

Hardware

- HP 3PAR StoreServ 10400 Storage
- HP 3PAR StoreServ 7200
- HP 3PAR StoreServ 7400
- HP Enterprise Virtual Array 8400 (EVA8400)
- HP XP24000 Disk Array
- HP 3PAR F400 Storage
- ProLiant DL380/5 Blade Servers (G5-8)
- HP BladeSystem c7000 Enclosure (with Virtual Connect)
- HP 5820 Switch Series
- HP 5500 Switch Series
- HP Virtual Connect FlexFabric-20/40 F8 Module for c7000 BladeSystem

Software

- HP 3PAR Recovery Manager Software for MS SQL Server
- HP 3PAR Replication Suite
- HP 3PAR Remote Copy
- HP 3PAR Virtual Copy
- HP 3PAR Thin Suite
- HP 3PAR System Reporter
- HP Systems Insight Manager
- HP Recovery Manager for VMware
- Microsoft SQL (versions 2005-2012)
- Oracle
- Windows® 2008, Windows® 2012
- Red Hat® Enterprise Linux® (version 5 and up)

HP services

- Foundation Care 24x7

300% space savings plus four times faster = competitive advantage

The 3PAR StoreServ ability to quickly and easily spin up storage for development has benefits that touch and improve many aspects of the business, according to Mirza. Just Energy builds all its core applications in-house through the efforts of a dedicated deployment staff pounding out mission-critical software, strategic new products, and variations as fast as the market demands. These applications sit on Microsoft® .NET and over eighty instances of Microsoft SQL Server® (versions 2005-2012). A quarter of the IT infrastructure is dedicated to this process and requires multiple copies of the data for each development project, from inception to test through QA and into production. Before, this was a process that required dedicated IT time, and a lot of it. This resulted in a lot of wasted productivity for both development and IT staff. One of the IT staff's biggest challenges was accommodating all the development requests for restores and refreshes of an environment, especially when it came to the data refresh.

"With HP 3PAR StoreServ, we now automate this entire process and have given it over to the development staff to do all by themselves, everything from the data refresh to creating snapshots, to mounting up the volume onto virtual machines, and so on," continues Mirza. "Through 3PAR StoreServ snapshot capability and the ability to manage only the delta of our snapshots, we gain back almost 300% of our storage space. It's a perfect HP storm of the multiple benefits: leveraged IT time, maximized efficiency of development time, and savings on storage space, all from one single feature. From a time and efficiency perspective, things now happen about four times faster than they used to."

Even simply provisioning a terabyte of volume, which Mirza says is a standard part of their VMware® deployment, saves time. Previously, this typically took about two hours. Now, on the HP 3PAR StoreServ Storage platform, it clocks in at ten minutes, an exponential improvement. "That's time that the IT staff can use for more critical activities," he notes. "All of this adds up to Just Energy being faster on its feet, more productive, and more responsive to the market—in an industry that demands response, 3PAR StoreServ technology gives us a definite competitive advantage."

HP support contract savings

When asked if he used any HP services, Mirza laughs and says, that he doesn't know if HP will think of this as positive, but he didn't purchase any additional support service for the HP 3PAR solution because he just didn't need it.

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"With our previous solutions, performance tuning the SAN cost us thousands and thousands as specific additional support services," he concludes. "However, the ability to tune the 3PAR StoreServ array is a standard part of our basic 24x7 storage support and not an extra cost item, and the basic support is excellent."

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