

S U C C E S S S T O R Y

Hitachi Storage Solutions at Work

HBO+EMTB

INDUSTRY Services: Architecture

SOLUTIONS **Consolidation/Simplification**
Hardware — Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage
Services — Provided by Hitachi TrueNorth Channel Partner Itaba3



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*Kia Hunter
IT Manager
HBO+EMTB*

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HBO+EMTB Designs a New Storage Solution with Itaba3 and Hitachi Data Systems

The advances in digital design coupled with the introduction of the digital camera have dramatically elevated the storage requirements of the architecture industry. The impact of the digital revolution on Australia-based architecture firm HBO+EMTB is no different, with the firm experiencing an explosion of data in the form of hundreds of thousands of digital photographs, brochures and design plans. To handle the data deluge, HBO+EMTB chose a solution based on Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage.

HBO+EMTB is a design house with studios in 21 cities across Asia Pacific. They offer diverse expertise in architecture, interior design, workplace solutions, urban design, landscape design, heritage and planning. Headquartered in Sydney, the firm has five offices throughout Australia and a strong network of offices in every major centre of the Asia Pacific region. HBO+EMTB's 300+ specialists deliver projects that shape the world's most dynamic cities.

To help manage the firm's inundation of digital data, Kia Hunter joined HBO+EMTB as IT Manager in early 2001. In her seven years with the company, Hunter has seen a dramatic increase in HBO+EMTB's storage requirements — fuelled by high resolution photographs of everything from lounge rooms to 3D building models — which has

resulted in HBO+EMTB boasting a massive image library.

For the IT department of six people, managing this data and accommodating for future growth is a constant challenge.

"The rate we consume storage is astounding," explained Hunter. "We used to be able to archive a design project on one to two CDs, but now we're lucky to get a project onto one or two DVDs because projects have increased in size dramatically over the years."

Compounding this data storage challenge is HBO+EMTB's aggressive growth strategy, which has expanded the company's IT footprint from one location in Sydney to a permanent presence in 10 countries around the world with over 300 employees. Forged from two

companies founded in 1912 and 1945, the amalgamated practice of HBO+EMTB was first established in Sydney in 1994 and has rapidly expanded throughout Australia to Canberra, Melbourne, Brisbane and Perth. With a vision to deliver professional design services in every major centre of Asia Pacific, HBO+EMTB has also expanded overseas to Auckland, Wellington, Bangkok, Singapore, Hong Kong, Manila, Shanghai and Beijing, and with partner offices into Tokyo, Seoul, Taipei, Bangalore, Mumbai, New Delhi, Hyderabad and Pune.

One of the primary responsibilities of the IT team is to provide HBO+EMTB with the storage backbone to support the firm's rapid growth and escalating storage requirements. With more and more employees joining the company and storing larger and larger files on the network, managing HBO+EMTB's digital data is a never ending challenge.

The Need for Change

For the last seven years, HBO+EMTB supported its storage growth by leveraging a server attached storage infrastructure that consisted of distributed servers in each office location. In Australia alone, HBO+EMTB had five separate servers that did not talk to each other. This decentralised infrastructure made data management difficult because all servers were managed remotely by HBO+EMTB's Sydney-based IT team.

"There is an expectation that we can expand and expand and expand to accommodate all of the data, but server attached storage doesn't work that way," explained Hunter. "We have servers all over the place. We have to manage each of those servers, the storage on each server and the backup on each server. It becomes a challenge when we don't have IT staff in each location."

Furthermore, this decentralised infrastructure made collaboration between offices difficult. Should an employee in Sydney need to view a project plan stored to the Melbourne server, Hunter would need to replicate the file. This time consuming process discouraged seamless interoffice collaboration.



Maintenance was also a challenge, with HBO+EMTB IT staff physically travelling to outer office locations when an IT upgrade was necessary. Between upgrades, HBO+EMTB leveraged a non-IT employee or an external contractor to maintain the servers and manage tape changes. Tape changes occurred frequently, with new disks filling up within a week or two.

With scalability, collaboration and maintenance a constant concern, Hunter recognised that an IT change was necessary.

Itaba3 and Hitachi Data Systems Provide the Solution

Deciding that server-based storage did not meet their needs, HBO+EMTB put out a tender for a new storage solution. After looking at solutions from three vendors, HBO+EMTB awarded the tender to Itaba3, implementing a storage solution from Hitachi Data Systems,

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the Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage. The implementation became a business solution rather than a quick fix, providing HBO+EMTB with storage to grow on. Itaba3 and Hitachi Data Systems have a strategic working relationship in place to ensure that all aspects of the IT change are managed with ease.

“We chose the Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage because of its capacity and upgradability. A few years down the line when we want to upgrade, we know that our system will be easily upgradable to and compatible with latest storage offering from Hitachi,” said Hunter. “Hitachi is consistent and their platform is future proof; they don’t have a reputation for change like other vendors do.”

Hunter selected a storage area network (SAN) infrastructure to centralise HBO+EMTB’s disparate IT operations at its Sydney headquarters. The rollout of the solution was undertaken in a phased approach. The first phase involved transferring all data from the disparate servers at headquarters to the SAN, eliminating the

need for internal storage within the servers. The second phase of the implementation was to continue the centralisation process by moving all outer office servers and archived data to the SAN. HBO+EMTB plans to eliminate all remote servers during 2009.

So far, Hunter and her team have relocated 1.2TB of active data and 1TB of archived data onto the SAN, but the Adaptable Modular Storage still has plenty of room to grow, with a current capacity at 2.6TB that can be easily expanded to over 50TB before a data-in-place upgrade to a larger Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage system will be needed.

The final step is disaster recovery. Hunter is currently developing HBO+EMTB’s disaster recovery strategy, which they plan to kick off in the coming months. It will involve deploying a second Hitachi SAN at the company’s disaster recovery site to enable cross-site

replication that will ensure complete data protection of their business critical assets.

“Hitachi isn’t just a solution for now; it is a solution for the future,” said Hunter. “We are building a rock solid foundation to grow on. Our ultimate goal is to be able to snapshot data locally and then replicate it to the disaster recovery site, ensuring data protection and availability at all times, even in the event of a disaster.”

Benefits to Grow on

To Hunter, there are many benefits from the new Hitachi solution. Scalability is no longer a concern as the SAN can expand easily to meet HBO+EMTB’s current and future requirements. In addition, consolidation onto the SAN has simplified data management. All data will be managed centrally from Sydney, which eliminates the need to travel to complete IT upgrades. With the SAN, the IT team is able to commission new storage easily, with minimal, if any, downtime. Data recovery is also greatly improved; should the team need to recover

a file or an image, the process using the SAN takes only minutes where in the past it could have taken days.

For HBO+EMTB designers and architects, data accessibility and collaboration between offices will be done with ease. HBO+EMTB will support its pool of images on the SAN so that employees can better collaborate on projects across geographies, increasing the ability to share images and search through archived work for inspiration on new projects. In addition, employee expectations for expandable data storage will be met, as HBO+EMTB now has a platform for growth.

About itaba3

itaba3 is a provider of high quality IT services and business advisory in Australia, offering comprehensive professional services to the business community. The company provides services for all business types and sizes, from the small to medium enterprise right through to the large multinational. itaba3 is an acronym for the tag “*Intelligent Technology & Business Advisory*” and 3 stands for the three business building block principles itaba3 adheres to: business essentials, business strategy and business efficiency.

The Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage systems are the most scalable, high-performance, high availability systems in their class. These products boast high end features normally associated only with large corporate sites — such as the ability to optimise performance based on application requirements with cache partitioning and advanced data protection with RAID-6 — making them optimal for small and mid-sized businesses, which have fast growing data storage needs and require high availability and performance requirements in a small footprint.



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