“Migrating data seamlessly using Hitachi Virtual Storage Platform has enabled us to efficiently handle information for ourselves and, more importantly, our customers.”

Cory Cater
Technical Architect
Kroll Ontrack

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INDUSTRY Information Technology

SOLUTIONS

Virtualisation, Enterprise Platform

Hardware — Hitachi Virtual Storage Platform (with previously installed Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage 2300 and 2500, and Hitachi NAS Platform 3080, powered by BlueArc®)

Software — Hitachi Device Manager, Hitachi Tuning Manager, Hitachi Dynamic Tiering, Hitachi Dynamic Provisioning, Hitachi Tiered Storage Manager

Services — Solution design and deployment consultancy provided by Hitachi Data Systems Global Solution Services
Kroll Ontrack Virtualises for Greater Flexibility and Performance with Hitachi Technology

Customers of Kroll Ontrack rely on its ability to manage and analyse mission-critical data quickly and effectively. In order to keep pace with demanding service level agreements (SLAs), the organisation refreshed its modular storage environment to create a cohesive virtual platform powered by Hitachi technology. Following a smooth deployment, the storage footprint was consolidated by a ratio of 4 to 1, making management and disaster recovery activities easier and more efficient. Successes to date have laid the groundwork for further storage innovation plans.

In March 2010, the organisation deployed Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage (AMS) 2500 and Hitachi NAS Platform, powered by BlueArc®, to support the growth of 2 of its mission-critical applications: Ontrack Inview and Control Centre. Later that year, Kroll Ontrack implemented a Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage 2300 with Hitachi NAS Platform to provide a platform for growth in its Computer Forensics division.

A Careful Selection Process

The team knew a modular storage architecture would not support future growth. "It was important for us to incorporate storage virtualisation into our new environment, enabling us to consolidate our assets and making it easier for us to manage and allocate resources on demand," said Cater. Cater provided a number of solution providers with performance data for Microsoft SQL Server and file server environments at Kroll Ontrack, with a request to come back with a recommended solution. The most compelling proposal was found to be that put forward by Hitachi Data Systems, which offered cost-effectiveness as well as a strong set of functionality that met the objectives Kroll Ontrack initially set out.

"Our legacy storage hardware was aging and it would soon become a challenge to keep up with capacity requirements," recalled Kroll Ontrack Technical Architect Cory Cater. "To ensure our maintenance costs remained manageable and our ability to service our customers paramount, it was decided we needed a more flexible, scalable, cost-effective and reliable storage platform, which had watertight disaster recovery capabilities."

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"We found by virtualising our entire environment behind a Hitachi Virtual Storage Platform (VSP), we could consolidate our resources and provide a single pane of glass for managing petabytes of information," Cater explained. The new Hitachi

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VSP now supports all file and application servers on a combination of VMware virtual machines and physical servers.

“The dynamic tiering functionality offered by the Hitachi VSP was a feature we knew would suit our SQL environment,” commented Cater, speaking further about why the team opted for the Hitachi Data Systems solution. “Monitoring capacity usage across the whole storage environment allowed us to tier data more effectively.

**A Well-planned Deployment**

Having chosen the new hardware, Kroll Ontrack asked consultants from Hitachi Data Systems Global Solution Services (GSS) to assist with the design and deployment of the new infrastructure. A team from GSS had been involved in the creation of the initial proposal; they built on their existing knowledge to design a configuration before coming onsite to carry out the scripting and tailoring necessary to optimise VSP performance at Kroll Ontrack.

“The in-depth involvement of Hitachi Data Systems GSS representatives from the outset meant that they had a great feeling for the complexity of our environment and really understood our challenges and requirements,” recalled Cater. “Their expertise made the migration process seamless; they offered flexible support, which, all importantly, minimised downtime for our clients.” Indeed, any activities that had a possibility of impacting the company’s ability to meet customer SLAs were carried out overnight or over weekends to avoid interference with its business obligations.

“Migration of the whole storage environment to the virtual infrastructure fronted by the Hitachi VSP was completed in just 2 months, and with no customer-impacting issues at all,” said Cater.

**Immediate Benefits**

With deployment complete, Kroll Ontrack is already seeing a number of benefits from its new virtualised storage infrastructure: “We can now manage the whole architecture centrally, using Hitachi Command Suite software. This enables us to gain full control of our storage resources,” said Cater. “Pressure on the IT team is removed, as much of the manual burden has now been lifted through increased automation and centralisation.” Allocation and migration of data across storage tiers used to take days, but the task can now be completed automatically, in a matter of hours. “Migrating data seamlessly using Hitachi Virtual Storage Platform has enabled us to efficiently handle information for ourselves and, more importantly, our customers,” Cater added.

Time savings were generated for the IT team, aided by Hitachi Data Systems GSS taking on the workload associated with configuring and installing the new platform, complementing savings in other areas. The new virtual platform enabled Kroll Ontrack to reduce its 12 storage racks to just 3 Hitachi VSP racks. This smaller footprint in the data centre means the team can expect to see power and cooling reductions too, which will translate into cost savings.

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There has been one final, unexpected bonus for Kroll Ontrack, which Cater and his colleagues are planning to make use of. Cater concluded: “Through our work with HDS, we have come into contact with much of its partner ecosystem; this has given us valuable contacts with a number of experts, who we look forward to working with as we move forward.”