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Dirk Schechinger
Team Leader
LBBW Asset Management

LBBW Asset Management (Investmentgesellschaft mbH)

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LBBW Asset Management Trusts Hitachi Performance to Ensure Security and Reliability of Daily Operations

LBBW Asset Management (Investmentgesellschaft mbH), based in Stuttgart, managed a total of 22 billion euro for its investors in January 2010. Without a well-functioning infrastructure, the wheels of the 100%-owned subsidiary of the Baden-Württemberg Landesbank would grind to a halt. To ensure that all applications run perfectly and data is securely stored, a reliable and high-performance storage solution is essential. Since the start of 2011, 2 Hitachi Virtual Storage Platform (VSP) systems have been handling this task for the company’s daily operations, including new user interfaces.

Few other industries place as much value on secure and professional handling of data than the financial industry. From banking discretion to the sums of money deposited, there are many good reasons why such a corporate IT architecture must run absolutely perfectly. In an era of modern, computer-aided trading platforms, IT is crucial for the work of around 170 LBBW Asset Management employees. This is why the company has been relying on systems from Hitachi Data Systems for several years: In 2007, the company purchased 2 Hitachi Network Storage Controller (NSC) 55 systems, which were powerful enough to consolidate the numerous islands of storage that were then being used. These islands were the result of the various mergers that gave rise to LBBW Asset Management in 2006.

Strategic Decision for an Enterprise System

Considering data growth rates as well as reliability and performance needs, the company’s IT management team decided to introduce the new VSP as the central enterprise storage system. “Our data volumes are constantly increasing, which is why scalability is a key topic. For us, though, reliability and performance are the most important aspects,” says Team Leader at LBBW Asset Management, Dirk Schechinger. “For this reason, we again decided on an enterprise solution with the VSP as opposed to a midrange solution.”

A Large Number of Systems with High Reliability

A multitude of Oracle systems form the core for activities in the funds sector and therefore the main operations of the entire company. The databases contain all information, from background analyses through to real-time financial transactions. A key role in this is played by Linux: In addition to Oracle systems running on Linux, LBBW Asset Management also uses VMware ESX servers with Linux and Microsoft Windows guest systems. The Windows environment is represented by Microsoft clusters. These are complemented by several clusters based on various Linux distributions. A virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) operated with Citrix XenDesktop and a Citrix XenApp platform provides access to the applications.

A high-performance storage system in this environment is, however, useless if it is not available. This is why the IT management at LBBW Asset Management introduced several measures to prevent downtime. “The individual applications are mirrored separately via both storage systems. If there is a problem, we can address it in isolation, without impacting the rest of the system,” explains Schechinger. “We also run extensive downtime simulations regularly and before any new installation. However, the systems from Hitachi Data Systems are extremely reliable, which ensures maximum protection.”

Full redundancy right through to emergency diesel generators and physical

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LBBW Asset Management
separation in separate rooms completes the concept on the hardware front. Remote monitoring via a separate demilitarized zone (DMZ) reports any faults to Hitachi Data Systems so that engineers can respond in real time. It also informs the IT team at LBBW Asset Management. There are good reasons for such an extensive overview: it enables auditors and supervisory bodies to maintain a keen eye on the security of company and customer data, and it ensures that the excellent reputation of LBBW Asset Management for infallibility is maintained.

**Uninterrupted Work**
The Virtual Storage Platform optimized graphical user interface (GUI) also helps ensure smooth uninterrupted workflows. Hitachi Command Suite, presented with VSP, simplifies and accelerates the management of the systems, which greatly reduces the number of clicks necessary. A task manager guarantees smooth work processes.

“The new streamlined user interface was a key theme in the development of the VSP,” explains Siegmund Kaminski, who manages the area of Commercial Sales at Hitachi Data Systems. “The load relief is tangible. There are hardly any more interruptions in workflows. This helps the IT teams save a huge amount of time.” Numerous reporting functions, including integrated Excel exports in csv format, complete the features of Hitachi Command Suite.

Hitachi Dynamic Provisioning (HDP) also plays a key role in ensuring simple administration of the system and reduces overall time and effort. “You no longer have to think about what goes where. Everything is so intuitive,” says Schechinger. “HDP has also helped us achieve a significant improvement in performance.” Previously, the IT team at LBBW Asset Management used individual RAID storage systems, which sometimes resulted in bottlenecks at high loads.

**More Disks, Less Storage Space and Less Consumption**
Hitachi Data Systems has also made some improvements to the hardware. For example, the housing of VSP can now hold hard drives of just 2.5 inches in size. The maximum number of disks has therefore risen to 2048. This means overall capacity of one VSP totals 2.6PB.

Although these values tend to be more theoretical, they do make decisive impacts on practical use: LBBW Asset Management currently has around 51TB (net) installed, while with the old system, it was barely 20TB. As such, the capacity of the storage has increased 250%, while energy consumption has decreased by around a third, with positive effects on cooling requirements.

By using the new shape, we have saved around 25% in weight, which means fewer raw materials; the storage space required has also been reduced. “Previously, we had 2 cabinets; today, we only need 1, despite the significant increase in capacity,” says Schechinger. “By introducing these measures, Hitachi Data Systems lives up to our own philosophy. We only place orders with companies that place as much value in sustainability as we do.”

**Success Breeds Success**
One outcome of the successful work of the IT team at LBBW Asset Management is that other companies are also now ordering IT services from LBBW Asset Management. In addition to LRI Invest from Luxembourg, parts of the parent company are also using the IT landscape of LBBW Asset Management. The integrated client functionality of VSP ensures management of data that complies with legal regulations.

Despite the additional users, no expansion of disk capacity is planned. “If we decide to add drives, we can be sure that it will be a simple process without the need for major resources,” says Schechinger. “Insert the disks, and allocate the memory. Done. Something that would previously have taken hours can now be done in just minutes.” For the IT team at LBBW Asset Management, it’s just a few clicks to success.