“With the Adaptable Modular Storage ... we have the first storage system in place that meets our requirements. The processor has lots of capacity, we can use the same controller and all we need to do is buy the disks.”

Mario Arloth
Head of IT Management Services
Helwig Schmitt GmbH

Management Services Helwig Schmitt GmbH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INDUSTRY</th>
<th>Services: Automotive Market Analysis</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>SOLUTION</td>
<td>Modular Platform, Business Continuity</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware</td>
<td>Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage 2500 (2)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Management Services Supports Massive Data Stores for the Automotive Industry with Hitachi Modular Storage

Management Services Helwig Schmitt GmbH, based in Hofgeismar, within the Hesse region of Germany, provides analysis and statistics specifically for the automotive industry. Processing market data demonstrates the power of the company’s information technology. Large quantities of raw data are supplemented by substantial volumes of data that make up the finished analyses and concepts. The ability to save data and make it available in a reliable manner is therefore critical for Management Services. For this reason, Management Services chose to rely on Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage (AMS) 2500.

The performance requirements for the ideal storage system for Management Services are very high due to the large quantities of data. However, without a powerful enough system in the market, this meant that the predictability of processing jobs was often uncertain, as operating times were volatile. As a result, Management Services was always looking for a powerful midrange storage system with serial-attached SCSI (SAS) and large cache capacities from a very early stage; this would allow the company to incorporate file servers and databases into a programmable structure.

Hitachi Modular Storage Provides the Required Performance

Hitachi Data Systems released Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage (AMS) at the end of 2008. “We were interested straight away but also a little skeptical at first. Only at first though...,” admits Mario Arloth candidly. “Up until then, we had never really been convinced by any storage system. With the AMS, however, we have the first storage system in place that meets our requirements. The processor has lots of capacity; we can use the same controller and all we need to do is buy the disks.”

Before Management Services could commission the new storage systems, there were a lot of tests to be performed; the company could not afford to have any downtime. But once all the tests had been

Our tests have clearly shown that when other systems are already unable to cope, the AMS 2500 will still be going strong.”

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Consistently Reliable Operation

Management Services currently uses 2 AMS 2500 systems, each equipped with a 16GB cache, making bottlenecks and volatility a thing of the past. “We can now check individual disks using the logical unit numbers (LUNs), which allow us to monitor performance data right down to the individual spindles,” says Mario Arloth. “We can see how much activity is kept from the disks by the cache.” The entire volume of stored data is currently 63TB. Each AMS consists of 224 disks; each disk offers approximately 300GB of storage capacity.

The superiority of the new infrastructure at Management Services can be measured in figures. AMS 2500 is so powerful that the company now also has capacity available for tests, a function that Mario Arloth and his team have already made use of. Even when the cache is reduced to only 2GB, AMS 2500 is still approximately 30% faster than the best comparable system offered by a competitor. “The AMS 2000 family is generally characterized by high performance levels. These levels are achieved primarily as a result of the quick SAS connection and the controller,” explains Commercial Sales Director at Hitachi Data Systems, Siegmund Kaminski. “The controller comes from our enterprise series and functions according to the active-active principle. This means that the second processor operates constantly, rather than just in the event of a failure, thereby improving performance.”

This functionality proved a real advantage, as André Dieball from Hitachi distributor Zycko confirms: “We are always getting positive feedback from our resellers regarding the system. The results of the Storage Performance Council (SPC) benchmarks also reinforce this feedback.”

High Availability of Hardware

The continuing expansion of Internet business, in particular, is currently gaining in importance for the company, as online analyses are being made increasingly available. The entire chain must operate smoothly, from the web servers and the ISP connections right through to the databases and the storage system. As a result, Management Services has identified the topic of business continuity to be the second focal point throughout the entire architecture, in addition to the high availability of hardware. To this end, data will be distributed among several data processing center sectors, situated several hundred meters from one another.

The company believes that the reserve capacity and scalability of AMS 2500 will help to ensure success for the foreseeable future. "At present, the volume of stored data for the Internet business alone is approximately 6 or 7 terabytes," says Arloth. "But this is the area where we’re already seeing the biggest growth." Until recently, data was transported by post, but as a result of both the increasing volumes and increasingly quick broadband connections, the majority is now being sent and stored online.

Data growth will also continue to accelerate in the future at Management Services Helwig Schmitt GmbH, as 3-dimensional and therefore even more data-intensive representations of analysis results will become increasingly important. However, Mario Arloth is not anxious when it comes to his IT infrastructure: "Our tests have clearly shown that when other systems are already unable to cope, the AMS 2500 will still be going strong. We are raring to go."