“With the latest hardware, Hitachi Virtual Storage Platform, we have complete peace of mind that the solution will deliver 100% data availability and optimum performance for all of NLB’s banking requirements.”

Matjaz Jelenic
Manager
Nova Ljubljanska Banka (NLB)

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NLB Improves and Consolidates Storage Infrastructure through Hitachi Data Systems Storage Virtualization Solutions

Nova Ljubljanska Banka (NLB) is the largest Slovenian international financial group, comprising over 49 companies. With an expanding international operation, NLB has seen exponential growth in its data storage requirements. By upgrading to Hitachi Virtual Storage Platform, NLB’s business became fully prepared to deal with burgeoning data storage requirements, with a reliable and scalable solution.

About NLB
The NLB group offers a wide range of financial services, including leasing, factoring and forfeiting, insurance and asset management through 12 banks and 39 other companies. The group’s mission is to become one of the leading, most profitable and reliable banking and financial groups in South Eastern (SE) Europe.

In response to the global financial crisis, NLB significantly changed its business strategy. The group redefined its strategic markets in order to gain competitive advantage for its banking offering across key territories in SE Europe. The new strategy led to the bank adjusting its internal operations to new operating conditions, mainly in the areas of corporate governance, risk management and investment appraisal.

A Change in IT Strategy
In 2010, the bank also implemented a new IT strategy focused on increasing business efficiency, reducing total cost of ownership and decreasing the number of technology solutions in the business by consolidating its IT architecture.

NLB had set clear IT goals for the entire business:

- A high level of availability
- Centralization of IT systems across the group

Integration with the systems used by subsidiaries of NLB
- State-of-the-art security to improve client confidence
- IT support for business-process redesign

One key focus in the new strategy was the improvement of data management systems. Disparate data systems needed to be consolidated into a single data warehouse system while other mission-critical IT operations, such as email, call centers and backup were to be centralized.

Like most businesses, the bank was coping with a massive increase in the amount of data generated by and entering the organization, with the rate of data storage needs growing at up to 40% year on year.

A major IT consideration for NLB was the rising operational costs of managing this increasing volume of data, which amounted to more than 50% of the total cost of storage. The traditional approach of simply adding storage and increasing capacity would no longer be a viable solution.

Infrastructure Upgrade
The bank adopted a service-oriented architecture and virtualized a significant amount of its servers. It also introduced the internationally recognized COBIT IT governance framework with the aim of mitigating operational risk.

“We find that HDS always provides a standout solution, and their 100% data availability guarantee made them an obvious choice for continuing to provide our storage technology.”
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Over 2 years, NLB conducted an overall upgrade across all IT and communications systems, including all software platforms and relational databases. The process involved upgrading the operating systems IBM® z/OS®, Microsoft Windows, Open VMS and Sun Solaris) on the mainframe and on most workstations across the organization.

Hitachi Virtual Storage Platform (VSP) was implemented on the mainframe to work with the 2 existing Hitachi Universal Storage Platform® (USP) installations. After installation, the consolidated storage capacity of the new virtualized VSP was 24TB while the USP provided 100TB.

“Having worked with Hitachi Data Systems (HDS) for a number of years, we felt that the team fully understood our IT strategy and we planned and designed the deployment requirements together. We couldn’t afford any mistakes in the implementation and felt confident that HDS’ implementation process would allow business-critical communications to continue with no downtime for the entire group,” says NLB Manager Matjaz Jelenic.

In addition to HDS, which had been the legacy storage provider for NLB for 10 years, NLB evaluated solutions from other leading vendors.

“While price was an important factor, we also needed a solution that guaranteed high availability and high performance from a provider that could fit our new technology strategy,” Jelenic explains. “We find that HDS always provides a standout solution, and their 100% data availability guarantee made them an obvious choice for continuing to provide our storage technology.”

Results

NLB has successfully turned its data center into a more flexible and efficient “information center” that is able to respond to business demands in a timely manner, while benefiting from scalability and reliability as business needs evolve in the future.

With more than 8,800 employees across the group and every transaction going through the mainframe, response time was highlighted as a crucial factor. The upgraded infrastructure has provided top performance and capacity, which has helped NLB to improve business operations and increase productivity.

The bank has also benefited from a future-proofed solution. “While typically the upgrade cycle for storage is around 3 to 4 years, our latest HDS deployment, Hitachi Virtual Storage Platform, is NLB’s 4th generation HDS deployment and the current market leader. In terms of meeting future high-data demands of the rapidly growing business, we are confident that the team is already working on the next evolution,” Jelenic concludes.