Schiavello and Hitachi Data Systems Build Data Services to Support Rapid Business Growth

Australia-based Schiavello Group generates revenue from design, construction and installation of commercial furniture and signage. Schiavello operates 18 different business units. It specialises in a number of commercial and residential market segments, including: workplace, healthcare, hospitality, education, retail, wholesale, manufacturing and commercial “fit outs.” Schiavello’s information technology team operates as a single department across the business, managing disparate workloads and demands. To stay competitive and ensure each business unit remains agile and at the forefront of the individual business unit’s industry, Schiavello selected Hitachi Data Systems as a partner.

About Schiavello Group

Founded in 1966 by Tony Schiavello, the Schiavello Group remains a family-owned business today, and has grown to become a multidisciplinary, global organisation. It is ranked by BRW as one of Australia’s top 100 private companies. The group, headquartered in Melbourne, employs 1,300 people globally and operates throughout Australia, Asia and the Middle East.

Opportunity and Challenge

Operating as a single IT unit across 18 different business units presented both an opportunity and challenge for Schiavello. The company had the opportunity to review the business growth as a whole and predict future demands on the company’s IT infrastructure. Different business units operating across industries, from manufacturing to education to design, required a diverse range of data sets. Therefore, the IT department had to cater for a broad range of data storage and recall requirements, all of which are predicted to increase exponentially over the next 5 years.

This hardware is a business enabler: Our business is growing fast and demands agile IT that supports our multinational approach. With Hitachi strengthening our company’s backbone, we’re able to support the business now and into the future.

Bernard Wansink
Information, Communications and Technology Manager
Schiavello
Bernard Wansink, information, communications and technology manager, determined that Schiavello required a partnership with a robust storage company that could provide an expandable IT growth plan for the company’s data systems.

“After completing a review of our previous infrastructure, involving extensive data modelling and examining the predicted growth of our business over the next 5 years, we found ourselves at a turning point,” he says. “We simply wouldn’t have been able to achieve the growth we expected with our existing system.”

Capacity planning was only one part of the need to restructure. Wansink explains that the business drivers for change were two-fold: “Not only did we need to increase our data storage capacity, but we also needed to safeguard our business continuity. Global expansion, compliance regulations and the growth of our business meant that we needed to effectively manage the risk our business was exposed to,” he recalls.

Schiavello’s data growth can be attributed to the company’s move towards real-time working and a paperless office. “As our company moves into the digital multimedia space, we see huge growth potential; we’re becoming a lot more real-time in the way we work,” Wansink adds.

The Solution’s Required Foundation: Business Continuity

With a primary data centre in operation, there was a business need for a second to support data replication and business compliance, as well as to mitigate risk.

“Risk identification, management and mitigation is crucial for the survivability of any organisation should disaster occur. Creation of a business continuity plan provided the foundation and justification for the Hitachi project,” Wansink explains.

“Understandably, our customers have very specific requirements about the way we collect, generate, back up, track and remove data related to their businesses. This increases our legal and risk requirements,” he says. “Our existing provider wasn’t upgradeable to the level that we required. We didn’t have the capacity or performance with the old system to support our ‘real-time’ working model.”

The project was structured into 2 stages. First, an enterprise-class dedicated disaster recovery facility was built. Second, the storage infrastructure was selected. Through a closed tender process involving EMC, Dell and Hitachi Data Systems, Schiavello investigated a number of options. Rigorous specifications and service requirements were used to judge the systems.

“Our solution needed to allow us to increase our capital investment in the data system gradually over the next 5 years, matching our investment to our growth. Hitachi Data Systems gave us this opportunity,” Wansink specifies. “Access to Hitachi’s planned product roadmaps gave us the reassurance that we would be able to upgrade as our business needed over the next 5 years.”

Schiavello selected the recently launched Hitachi Unified Storage 130 because it would provide brand new technology with a minimum 5-year lifespan that would be fully upgradeable and compatible with the business roadmap.

“We had very clear governance, roles and responsibilities of the implementation. We need 99.999% uptime and zero business interruptions during migration; Hitachi delivered that,” he says.

Working with a Hitachi-appointed project manager, experienced Hitachi team members and skilled internal resources, the IT team members, ensured there was no impact on the business or lost productivity.

Schiavello also operates the Hitachi Data Protection Suite to achieve the compliance, backup and archiving required by the business.

“Our international offices’ core systems are reliant on the Australia-based data centre, so maintaining security, uptime and completing the implementation without interruption was crucial for the smooth operation of our global business,” he adds.

The Result: Centralized Data and Management

The Hitachi solution provides real-time asynchronous replication between the physically separated data centres. In addition, the ability to manage both environments and view performance reporting from one console, gave Schiavello a new critical tool.

Since the implementation, Schiavello has achieved the required business continuity, compliance and agility. “The business is now comfortable with the risk that it is holding, and we’re no longer reliant on one data centre, in one building, for our global operations,” reports Wansink. “Before the project, we were starting to get a lot of bespoke data that people kept locally, impacting our compliance, security and the management team’s ability to oversee operations. The Hitachi system has allowed us to centralise data and bring the management back to an enterprise level.”

Schiavello is also benefiting from the Hitachi Data Systems tools. The IT team members are able to look at workloads, growth and various statistics about the data the business units create and store.
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“A secondary outcome of the project has been a reduction in the environmental impact with reduced power and cooling requirements; fans now run at 40% instead of 80% of capacity,” Wansink reports.

A Look Ahead
Schiavello staff are already planning upgrades to the system: “I think we’ll see even greater improvements when we implement automated document management and automated workflow products over the next 12 to 18 months,” says Wansink. “The Hitachi upgrade means we’re able to look at applications for improving business intelligence, automated workflow and document management, upgrading our customer relationship management system all within the next 12 months.”

He adds, “This hardware is a business enabler: Our business is growing fast and demands agile IT that supports our multinational approach. With Hitachi strengthening our company’s backbone, we’re able to support the business now and into the future.”

Having been impressed with the performance, compliance and migration process, Schiavello considers Hitachi to be a key supplier and true business partner.