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*Simon Yeandle
Chief Financial Officer
oOh!media*



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INDUSTRY Publishing and Media: Advertising

SOLUTIONS *Modular Platform, Virtualization, Business Continuity and Replication*
Hardware — Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage 2100
Software — Hitachi TrueCopy® Synchronous
Services — Provided by Regal Information Technology

Hitachi Storage Helps oOh!media Manage Exponential Data Growth Across Its Offices in Australia

Despite the global financial crisis and the impact of social and digital media on traditional marketing budgets, out-of-home (ooh) advertising is still a rapidly growing industry. Its growth has been rising steadily since 2002. In fact, industry analysts still forecast strong expansion. One organization at the heart of that growth is oOh!media. The largest retail signage media owner in Australia, oOh!media is a specialist in out-of-home consumer advertising. To meet the challenges of its continued growth, oOh!media selected a Hitachi storage solution that would address its rapidly increasing data storage requirements.

Background

Outdoor shopping center signs and large format billboards all form part of Australia's AUD\$427 million out-of-home advertising industry. The fastest growing organization within this sector is oOh!media Group Limited, a dynamic company with a 21-year history of deep experience and record growth. With a national network of out-of-home advertising sites, ranging from super-sites to retail centers and mobile sites, oOh!media is Australia's largest provider of retail out-of-home advertising and is one of the nation's leading large format players. oOh!media operates from six offices in Australia, including Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide and three in Sydney.

For the last four years oOh!media's annual growth has surpassed industry averages. When out-of-home spending contracted by 12 percent in 2009, largely due to the global financial crisis, oOh!media's revenues increased by 14 percent. In 2010, the company looks set to once again buck the trend with a growth rate greater than the industry average, announcing a record half-year result with sales revenue up 36 percent to AUD\$50.6 million.

The Challenge

oOh!media operates in an industry that involves producing and sending large data files to and from its other offices

and clients. In line with its record revenue growth, oOh!media's data inventory tripled from just over 1TB to 3TB in just 12 months, meaning the business had almost reached its maximum storage capacity. The biggest challenge for the company is to ensure its storage capacity keeps pace with its increasing data usage.

The majority of new business briefs received by the sales team are via email, so it is that critical email is always available and the network has the capacity to handle large data transfers. oOh!media's data growth has been very erratic, growing by a few gigabytes in some months and more than a terabyte in others.

"We keep photographic records of all our outdoor billboard campaigns and signage, which are all in high resolution format," says Chief Financial Officer at oOh!media, Simon Yeandle. "We also need to provide clients with proof of posting for all new campaigns, and that alone means up to 8,000 photos per fortnight coming in and out of the business. As a result, we were tripling our storage year on year, and our infrastructure simply couldn't keep up," he explains.

"Media files sizes are also growing substantially: not two-fold, but four-fold. There has also been a change in media format, from static to multimedia, further increasing file sizes. In some cases, the file sizes were so large that we would run out of disk space



"With Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage we have the scalability and performance to cope with our exponential data growth and continue to flourish as a business."

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and the network would fail, resulting in downtime of at least three hours for each incident,” adds Yeandle. “That downtime could result in massive costs to the business and would put us at risk of losing vital data and business development opportunities in the process. It just wasn’t sustainable.”

oOh!media also wanted to get better efficiency out of its existing storage infrastructure. The organization didn’t have a specific storage network in place; data was being stored on locally attached disks across a number of servers and there was no central management of data.

“Our network was being massively underutilized. On some server arrays we had hundreds of gigabytes of storage space available, while others were running at full capacity,” says Yeandle. “Some of our servers were running with only 15 percent of the disk utilized, so we needed a better way to manage our network and our data more efficiently. These servers were spinning on a daily basis, which generated a lot of heat, took up valuable space and brought increased running costs.”

The Choice: A Managed Storage Solution

oOh!media outsources all of its network IT requirements to Regal Information Technology, which also serves as a strategic business partner. Technical Director at Regal Information Technology, David Cleminson, advised oOh!Media to consider a reliable and scalable storage area network (SAN) infrastructure. This would provide redundancy for their environment as well as support current and future applications, and scale with organizational growth.

“We were really looking for equipment that would be supported by a proven vendor that delivers on what it promises for support, reliability and performance — a best of breed,” says Cleminson.

Rather than spending money on replacing the existing servers, which were only six months old, Regal Information Technology decided it would be more cost-effective to implement a virtual infrastructure to streamline oOh!media’s storage.

“We didn’t simply want to throw more storage or hardware at the problem. Instead, by understanding oOh!media’s processes and existing network environment, we could find a solution that would help them better utilize what they already had, and potentially defer costs altogether,” Cleminson says.

With this in mind, Regal Information Technology recommended the Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage (AMS) 2100. This reliable, scalable storage system provides enterprise-grade performance to manage the company’s data and other business applications, and enable virtualization of its existing servers. Hitachi TrueCopy® Synchronous software, a remote mirroring feature built into the AMS 2100 that saves data to the primary and secondary site simultaneously, would provide oOh!media with the ability to create a disaster recovery site in the near future.

“We were looking for a storage area network that would virtualize and better utilize oOh!media’s existing servers, as well as provide additional storage capacity,” says Cleminson. “The AMS 2100 provides the business with stability from a redundancy perspective, high data availability across all its offices and reduced downtime for system maintenance. The Hitachi solution also provides the ability to scale storage upwards and outwards with extra capacity and performance, quickly adapting with oOh!media’s exponential and sometimes erratic data growth.”

Deployment of the AMS 2100 took place in October 2009 and was completed in three weeks. The migration of the servers onto the hypervisor took a month, due to the limited outage opportunities they had to migrate the servers.

Improved Capacity and Server Consolidation for oOh!media

Since implementing the AMS 2100, oOh!media has increased its storage capacity from just over 3TB to 17TB, while consolidating its existing servers from a full rack to half a rack. This means the company can expand its storage in line with its data growth, and additional capacity can easily be added into the existing rack without the need for additional enclosures.

“If we had stayed with our existing infrastructure, there is no way we could have continued to grow as a business,” said Yeandle. “Once you reach your data limit, this starts to have serious repercussions on business processes and performance. Since implementing the Hitachi AMS solution we’re no longer restricted, have removed the risk to our business, and now have the performance and scalability to handle whatever files sizes are coming into the business.”

Looking Forward

oOh!media now has the ability to bring new products and businesses on board without substantial investment. The core infrastructure platform has been implemented to deliver performance and availability as the organization grows, with incremental increases in space to support these initiatives.

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Moving forward, oOh!media has plans to use the central storage solution to replicate data between two SANs, so they have a disaster recovery solution in place. This will provide the organization with a business continuity plan that provides greater stability and peace of mind.

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