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IT Manager
Swan Taxis*



Swan Taxis Limited

INDUSTRY Transportation

SOLUTIONS **Modular Platform, Business Continuity**
Hardware — Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage (AMS) 2100
Software — Hitachi TrueCopy® remote replication
Services — Provided by Hitachi TrueNorth Channel Partner Open Systems Supply

Swan Taxis Maintains 24/7 Operations of 1,700 Car Fleet with Hitachi Storage Infrastructure

Perth is the capital of Western Australia, Australia's largest state. One of the most isolated metropolitan areas on earth, the city represents a mix of vibrant contrasts, ranging from stunning forests and uncrowded beaches to the lively city streets, which attract visitors back time and again. With a population of 1.6 million and covering an area of over 6,100 square kilometers (1.5 million acres), Perth requires a reliable public transport network to move people across the city. Swan Taxis, a private taxi company, selected Hitachi modular storage to maintain 24/7 operations of its fleet of 1,700 cars and, in turn, provide the best service possible to its customers.

Background

Formed in 1928, Swan Taxis Limited is a professional fleet of taxi cabs that provides a vital public transport service 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, to the Perth metropolitan community. Operating from its premises in Victoria Park in Perth, Swan Taxis' 150 in-house staff provide its fleet of cars with full contact center support and dispatch services. Providing public transport to a large metropolitan area is no easy feat, particularly when the population continues to grow and customers have ever-increasing expectations when it comes to customer service.

Challenge

The main challenge for Swan Taxis is ensuring that it is meeting customer demand and providing a transport service that is always available. Critical to providing this service is its call center and administration hub, which acts as a back office for customer bookings and manages its large fleet of cars.

Another pressure is being able to adapt and grow with demand. Western Australia continues to experience the fastest population growth rate compared to the national average. As a result, over the last five years Swan Taxis has added over 700 cars to meet customer demand. Today, the company receives over eight million customer calls

annually, which translates to 6.5 million taxi dispatch jobs per year.

"Public transport is a 24/7 business, so we have to ensure that our booking and dispatch system is always available," said IT Manager at Swan Taxis, Rick Vincent. "However, with customer bookings increasing each year, we needed a more efficient dispatch system as well as enough storage to manage the influx of customer data."

Swan Taxis was using a bank of Acer servers, with company data stored on SCSI hard disks. Each server was assigned to a specific machine, meaning there was no shared storage network. Using this process, retrieving information by contact center staff was a slow process, as data could not be accessed from the one desktop PC.

The company also had no secondary data backup site in the event of a disaster at its headquarters. Data was manually backed up to tape from its servers and this could only be done during a period of minimal activity, which is a rare occurrence for a 24/7 taxi firm. A new dispatch system to manage backups in a disaster recovery situation would create more data, which would further hinder the backup process.

"Our system lacked functionality and adaptability and only allowed company data to be stored at the primary location," Vincent explained. "Physically backing up the data to tape was time consuming. In the event of a network failure the server would have to be reinstalled from scratch, which could also result in the loss of corporate data."



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“As a result, we realized that we needed a storage network that could facilitate faster access to data across the business, manage the influx of data being processed each day and help us improve our customer service,” Vincent said.

The Solution: Virtualized Storage

Swan Taxis decided to replace the company’s outdated taxi dispatch system with a new solution from MT Data. The new system would provide the contact center with a fully customizable and easily expandable back-end system to view all customer and driver data. This system operates on a Microsoft® SQL Server®, which required a robust platform for SQL to be installed on.

Swan Taxis has been a long-standing customer of Open Systems Supply, trusting the business for all of its IT requirements. After assessing different hardware solutions, Swan Taxis chose the Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage (AMS) 2100, a reliable, scalable storage system that provides enterprise-grade performance. The AMS 2100 manages the company’s emails, databases and other business applications and can also enable Swan Taxis to virtualize its existing servers in future. Hitachi TrueCopy® remote replication software, a remote mirroring feature built into the AMS 2100 that saves data to the primary and secondary site simultaneously, was also a key selling point.

“We were looking for a storage area network (SAN) that was reliable and could autonomously save all data across to a disaster recovery site,” said Vincent. “Hitachi offered us a much more cost-effective and scalable solution compared to its competitor’s offerings. I was really impressed with the support expertise that both Hitachi and Open Systems Supply provided. They catered to our every demand and also offered a much faster deployment.”

The implementation occurred in August 2009 and was completed in a matter of days. Two technicians from Acer Storage and a technician from Hitachi Data Systems assisted Vincent onsite during the installation process. A Hitachi technician also stayed for three days following the installation to ensure Vincent and his IT team were capable of managing the network themselves and were fully up to speed.

Improved Scalability, Availability and Performance for Swan Taxis

The AMS 2100 virtualized all of Swan Taxis’ existing servers, ensuring 99.99% data availability (with no single point of failure) for customer data storage. Swan Taxis’ staff can now access customer and driver data from any machine, helping them to meet customer service demands quickly and efficiently.

“Most of the operational benefits are fairly hidden, but it gives us the backbone performance to function as a 24/7 business without any worry about our storage systems,” said Vincent. “We needed a solution that was extremely reliable and simple to use, and the AMS 2100 is just that.”

The AMS 2100 provides Swan Taxis with a capacity of 6.7TB, and this can be scaled up to meet the company’s future growth. This expansion can be done seamlessly in a live environment, which means no server downtime is required. The secondary disaster recovery site from TrueCopy® software also provides Swan Taxis with secure data backup in the event of a disaster at the primary site.

“Previously we’d need to schedule a time to manually back up our data that would be minimally disruptive to our business,” explained Vincent. “Now, TrueCopy runs autonomously in the background and maintains the copy on the secondary server. The Hitachi solution gives us complete peace of mind that our data is always secure and has reduced our data maintenance by at least 50%, saving over 1,900 staff hours per annum.”

A Look Forward

Vincent is confident he has the ideal infrastructure in place to ensure the performance and availability of a 24/7 call center network, and also the scalability to accommodate any future growth demands for the business.

“The Hitachi storage solution has clearly demonstrated that it is providing a valuable, long-term investment for the business. While initially it was specced out to be part of the dispatch upgrade program, we have now planned to move all of our corporate data over to the Hitachi system in the next few years,” Vincent noted.

“The ease of configuration and expansion of the storage is fantastic, meaning we can expand our capacity as the needs arise. Our storage can simply grow along with the business and will assure that we continue to deliver on the high level of service to our customers,” Vincent said.

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