

Hitachi Storage Solutions at Work

Ressources Mutuelles Group

Industry

Finance: Insurance

Solution—Tiered Storage/Consolidation

Hardware: Hitachi TagmaStore® Network Storage Controller model NSC55

Software: Hitachi Universal Replicator software

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—Laurent Lucas
Head of IT Production
Ressources Mutuelles Group

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Hitachi Data Systems Underwrites Business Continuity Improvements for Ressources Mutuelles Group Insurance Company

One of France's largest mutual insurance carriers was prospering with a growing customer base and expanding services, but it was also facing mounting compliance regulations and limited data storage capacity. To ensure a new business continuity policy and keep 24/7 business operations running smoothly, Ressources Mutuelles Group called on Hitachi Data Systems for a dual-site storage architecture based on Hitachi TagmaStore® Network Storage Controller and Hitachi Universal Replicator software.

Ressources Mutuelles Group insures nearly one million people across France and is quickly expanding its services and customer base through a variety of channels, including telemarketing and brokers. Business operations are conducted every day of the year, around the clock. So access to the data supporting those operations is of premium importance.

Insurance is offered through Ressources Mutuelles Group's four subsidiaries: Sphéria Val-de-France, Mutuelle Atlantique, Just' Ensemble, and Spheria Vie. Every insurance policy and contract comprises subsets of documents that must be categorized and stored—as well as retrievable at any time to assist policy holders with accidents, life changes, and loss.

Meeting Business Growth Challenges

To continually serve its customers as well as attain new business, Ressources Mutuelles Group employed partially automated processes as well as face-to-face client interactions. Also, innovative text-to-speech software was working atop the company's enterprise resource planning (ERP) management systems to generate spoken prompts in voice response systems and to interface with e-mail and order verification activities.

Business was booming, and the Ressources Mutuelles Group was challenged to keep up with increasing demands. The company realized an aggressive 15 percent growth in business data volumes year after year, and financial

and compliance requirements for records retention were quickly mounting. The Ressources Mutuelles Group would need to improve its technology platform. Performance levels were not optimum for processing the more than 700GB of production data, especially with impending data growth. Limited storage capacity was also an issue, and improving the reliability of disaster recovery capabilities was a requisite to securing the company's records databases in the event of outage.

"We provide insurance against loss to customers, so naturally we wanted to provide assurance on the back end as well by strengthening our technical abilities to meet business and compulsory demands," says Laurent Lucas, head of IT production for Ressources Mutuelles Group.

Assessing New Storage Requirements

To gain the back-end assurance that Ressources Mutuelles Group was seeking, Lucas needed to revisit the company's existing storage infrastructure and determine new business and IT requirements. Presently, the production operations straddled two company locations in Nantes and Orleans, designed as dual-production sites. Each site managed 50 percent of the databases, housed on IBM® systems, and attempted half-mirrored replication. Backups to externalized tape libraries were managed offsite by a contracted provider, with full backups being conducted quarterly. Unfortunately, the configuration was plagued with challenges.

To design a new storage landscape for Ressources Mutuelles Group, Lucas sought bids from incumbent IBM as well as EMC and Hitachi Data Systems. Specifically, his goals were to "uplevel" security and performance of the production database environment by establishing a business continuity plan, more cost-effective replication procedures, and greater storage capacity

and throughput. He wanted to acquire disaster recovery functionality to asynchronously transfer data between the two primary sites using a low transmission rate to accommodate the text-to-speech encoding software and to further ERP application development. The new storage platform would also need to easily integrate with Ressources Mutuelles Group's heterogeneous environment and have the functionality to reliably extract and restore data at any time.

"Ideally, we were looking for a storage vendor to provide scalability, reliability, performance, and integration capabilities, as well as a cost-effective and growth-oriented business continuity solution," says Lucas. "We found it all with the Hitachi TagmaStore® Network Storage Controller."



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Head of IT Production
Ressources Mutuelles Group*

Underwriting Business Continuity Strength

Ressources Mutuelles Group installed one Network Storage Controller model NSC55 at each production site to carry out the modern, high-performance storage plans. Model NSC55 rapidly shapes the storage enterprise by combining controller-based virtualization with logical partitioning and universal replication to promote transparent, non-disruptive movement and protection of data—all from a single, easy-to-use management interface.

Lucas forecasted storage capacity requirements to total at least 1TB in the next 24 months. With the new Hitachi platform, scalability is not an issue. Each model NSC55 boasts 72TB of internal storage capacity and manages 16PB of internal/external storage capacity. By matching application requirements to storage attributes, model NSC55 helps Ressources Mutuelles Group meet performance and availability concerns by responding quickly and cost-effectively to evolving business requirements and quality of service needs.

Business continuity is supported by the Hitachi platform's federated data replication functionality. Using the full-featured Hitachi Universal Replicator software to efficiently unify this heterogeneous storage landscape,

the Ressources Mutuelles Group is able to achieve its asynchronous replication remotely. And rather than burdening cache memory, Universal Replicator software engages disk journaling to ensure data integrity and write order fidelity of copies between any supported storage systems, regardless of operating systems or protocols, to provide significant flexibility for data distribution and failover alternatives.

"The model NSC55 allowed us to achieve a real gain in power that was crucial for fluidity and automation of commercial operations, and it

has weathered development of our ERP without incident—so far, we have moved from three deployed ERP modules to eight," says Lucas.

Gaining Performance and Reliability

Ressources Mutuelles Group achieved substantial benefits with the implementation of the Hitachi platform, including nearly limitless storage capacity and fortified disaster recovery for business continuity. Ressources Mutuelles Group also has implemented ERP Aneto, the world-leading French mutual benefit insurance system. This solution runs on the IBM AIX® operating system, the BEA TUDEXO transaction monitor, and SGBD Oracle. Ressources Mutuelles Group's volume measurement is 1TB for each environment. Universal Replicator software's asynchronous replication capabilities enable real-time consistent distant imaging in the recovery plan activity framework. Model NSC55 contributed to a three-fold increase in throughput performance of production transactions. Mission-critical data is safe from potential loss and readily accessible at any time.

Ressources Mutuelles Group also has seen simplified administrative activities due to model NSC55 enabling automated replication and dashboard visibility across pooled storage resources. Administrators are now able to verify and validate developments with the ERP application, something not possible prior to the Hitachi platform deployment.

"Our new Hitachi storage environment allowed us to drastically improve performance and disaster recovery capabilities in the event of outage. Our end users have already noted a net improvement in productivity," says Lucas. "We are perfectly satisfied with Hitachi Data Systems, and now that we have a reliable storage architecture in place, we can continue to excel in providing the high caliber of products and services our customers expect."

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