Hitachi Storage Solutions at Work
The Good Guys Discount Warehouses

Industry
Retail

Solution

Hardware: Hitachi TagmaStore® Universal Storage Platform model USP100, Hitachi Thunder 9570V™ high-end modular storage system

Software: Hitachi ShadowImage™ In-System Replication, Hitachi Volume Migration, and Hitachi Universal Volume Manager software, and Hitachi Performance Monitor feature

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— Joanne Stubbs
IT Manager
The Good Guys
Hitachi Data Systems Supports Rapid Growth of The Good Guys Discount Warehouses

Established in 1960, The Good Guys Discount Warehouses is one of Australia’s largest retailers of consumer electronics, selling a full range of goods, including cameras, big-screen televisions, computers, air conditioners, and vacuum cleaners. With its famous “Pay Less, Pay Cash” slogan, The Good Guys is known for delivering quality brands at the best price.

The retailer differentiates itself in the increasingly competitive consumer electronics market by offering the widest choice possible—both in the number of brands and price levels. With this value proposition, The Good Guys has grown from a small family business to become a household name in Australia. There are now more than 70 stores Australia-wide.

To support this rapid growth, The Good Guys needed to move from a legacy application to an enterprise resource planning (ERP) system that could support its expansion and success. The infrastructure behind it needed to be capable of supporting business-critical applications and storing data that would be used for reporting and forecasting.

Joanne Stubbs, IT manager for The Good Guys, recalled that when she took the project on she was doubtful that she would find a storage vendor that could deliver and implement a storage solution within a two-week timeframe, so that business would not be disrupted.

“Considering the sheer magnitude of the job, I was extremely dubious that a storage solution could be up and running seamlessly and quickly, and we really couldn’t afford to have business operations affected,” said Stubbs.

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“A Tiered Approach

The proposal process was highly competitive and involved all major storage vendors. However, Hitachi Data Systems approached The Good Guys with a business solution rather than a bigger and faster box, using performance tools to size a solution for the company’s current and future requirements. The recommended Application Optimized Storage™ solution from Hitachi Data Systems focused on ease of migration, low risk, and business continuity.

Hitachi Data Systems proposed tiered storage built on Hitachi TagmaStore® Universal Storage Platform, model USP100, along with Hitachi ShadowImage™ Heterogeneous Remote Replication software bundle, various business continuity and management software modules, and ongoing support services. As The Good Guys had grown over the years to become a large organization, and this growth was predicted to continue, Hitachi Data Systems moved the goal posts and proposed enterprise-level storage rather than the originally specified modular system.

“Hitachi understood how important it is for a company like ours, which is growing at such a rapid pace, to not only have our immediate requirements addressed but also have future provisions in place,” said Stubbs.

An added benefit was that the Universal Storage Platform is a proven system. Unlike some competitors, Hitachi Data Systems was able to show The Good Guys that a solution with the USP100 at the core had already delivered results for real companies.

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Storage in a Heterogeneous Environment

In June 2005, Hitachi Data Systems provided a loan of a Hitachi Thunder 9570V™ high-end modular storage system to address immediate performance and space problems. The company then migrated the data from the legacy IBM® FASTT to the Thunder 9570V system and then to the USP100, with minimal disruption to business operations. The amount of core application data moved initially was 400GB, and it has doubled
since the implementation. The data migrated was from the ERP database, which includes total inventory, sales, goods returned, and the finance system.

“Hitachi Data Systems delivered and implemented the USP100 within a week of us signing the contract,” said Stubbs. “It was a pain-free process to implement the solution, even with the challenge of not having a fully functional computer room for it to reside in. The Hitachi Data Systems team went the extra mile and put together a detailed project proposal for extra power requirements and air conditioning, which was approved immediately, and the rest is history.”

As the Hitachi Data Systems solution is compatible with other suppliers’ products, The Good Guys did not have to dispose of any of its current hardware or software. In fact, the company’s existing IBM FAS2T was deployed for its tier two storage, which manages data not critical to the operation of the business. In addition, Hitachi Data Systems solutions were proven to work with Oracle databases and an IBM AIX® operating environment.

“The Hitachi Data Systems storage solution was not the cheapest on the market, but the benefits clearly outweighed the cost, so we had no hesitation in choosing Hitachi,” said Stubbs. “The decision is part of our growth strategy and investment in the company’s future.”

Preparing for the Future
The Good Guys can now accurately and rapidly access information and, in turn, make quicker business decisions. The centralized information storage now uses one core database, contributing to the company’s overall IT strategy of enabling grid computing.

Tier one and tier two storage has now been successfully implemented by Hitachi Data Systems, and The Good Guys is currently in the process of specifying tier three and disaster recovery requirements.

“Our current applications are performing very well with all additional stores coming online, and our capacity for future growth is assured,” Stubbs said.

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Existing Investments and the Universal Storage Platform

The Universal Storage Platform extends the useful life of existing storage resources, so they will not become obsolete ahead of their depreciation schedule. Consolidating existing storage devices into one or more Hitachi storage platforms can improve resource utilization, lower costs, and simplify data management. Consolidation allows organizations to reduce the total number of software licenses, lower maintenance and environmental costs, and centralize management functions.

With capabilities for aggregating and virtualizing storage resources across both Hitachi and non-Hitachi storage systems, the Universal Storage Platform helps organizations maximize the use of IT assets as well as improve efficiency and reduce costs. Multiple storage systems can become part of the common storage pool, managed via a single software console for data migration, replication, and other tasks.