

“Not only did we provide food orders on time every day with the HDS solution, but also the hugely improved technical performance meant that processing overnight food orders regularly beat the deadline by over two hours, a 35% improvement.”

Mark Dickson, Head of Technology Operations and Infrastructure Marks & Spencer



ECONOMICS DISCOVER INNOVATION
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M&S Migrates to Hitachi Solution to Support Rapid Batch Processing and Ensure Daily Availability of UK's Best-Loved M&S Foods

Challenge: Ensure thousands of food replenishment orders are delivered successfully every day, even during peak season.

Solution: Migrate to high-performance infrastructure to transform and simplify infrastructure.

Outcome: With orders reaching suppliers two hours earlier, the risk of late delivery has been all but eliminated.

The Challenge

Keep Shelves Stocked, No Matter What

One of the UK's iconic high-street brands, Marks & Spencer (M&S) has over 850 stores in the UK, generating sales of £10.3 billion, with food accounting for over 50% of its turnover. Consumers expect the highest standards from M&S in terms of quality, value and service, and that the right products are on the shelves every day. Growing sales at M&S support its belief that it is “newness and innovation that makes M&S food special,” and they can launch over a thousand new products in a year. Naturally, replenishing stock for successful and seasonal products is even more important: For example, fast reporting and replenishment was essential for M&S Belgian Chocolate Jaffa Sphere one of its fastest-selling desserts ever, which sold over 170,000 units in just six weeks.

Each store reports its daily sales, and the data is then analyzed overnight to provide the replenishment orders to be sent out to each supplier. Replenishment orders must be sent by 5:15 a.m. to give suppliers enough time to ensure stock is delivered to refill the shelves across the UK. As sales volumes grew, the time taken to process the sales figures overnight to produce the next-day supplier orders gradually took longer and longer, getting dangerously near the deadline.

Head of Operations at Marks & Spencer, Mark Dickson reports, “While we had never actually missed the target, we had less and less room to adapt. If we had experienced a technical challenge, we had almost no time to recover the overnight batch tasks, and sending supplier orders at 5:15 a.m., or earlier, is absolutely critical for our business.”

M&S

EST. 1884

Marks & Spencer (M&S)

INDUSTRY

Retail

SOLUTION

Enterprise, Consolidation, Migration

HARDWARE

Hitachi Virtual Storage Platform G1000
Hitachi Accelerated Flash

SOFTWARE

Hitachi Command Suite

SERVICES

Hitachi Data Systems Global Services

Outcomes

- Overnight batch processing times improved by 35%.
- Reduced footprint by 75%.
- Reduced storage-related operational IT expenses by more than 50%.

With an IT infrastructure that had grown in size and complexity, M&S identified data storage and management as a critical area that could impact overnight batch processing. How could the IT division optimize technical performance to help ensure that the M&S food stores continued to get the right foods on the right shelves at the right time, never disappointing a customer, especially during peak season?

The existing data storage landscape at M&S provided support for almost all production, development and test environments. From website to finance, food to supply chain, multiple business units placed competing demands for performance and capacity.

Storage Governance Manager at Marks & Spencer, Alex Ling explains, "As new storage devices and systems had been added, complexity became a significant challenge to performance and overall stability. With order processing running so close to the deadline, we could not afford any kind of outage or slowdown, which represented a considerable business risk. Additionally, complex systems are hard to manage, and as a result operational costs were starting to rise."

Ling continues, "At the business level, M&S always looks to control its operational costs. If we knew which systems were costly to operate and support, and allocated expenses accordingly, we could direct investments and resources more effectively. The existing environment did not provide the detailed cost visibility we wanted, limiting our ability to understand, adjust and optimize operations," he explains. "We set out strategic goals to improve manageability and embed stability, at reduced capital and operational cost, based on a simplified storage landscape that would offer greater cost visibility."

The Solution

High-Performance, Cost-Effective Storage

M&S looked at simply increasing capacity on existing systems through to complete reform of the data storage infrastructure. With long-term business simplification in mind, M&S wanted to reduce complexity, increase total capacity and performance, and cut both device acquisition costs and operational costs.

After careful consideration, M&S selected two Hitachi Virtual Storage Platform (VSP) G1000 systems with hybrid flash, capable of replacing multiple devices throughout the systems infrastructure. The VSP G1000 models provide immense scalability combined with very high storage performance, based on a clean systems architecture that helps to cut operational costs.

Head of Infrastructure Operations at Marks & Spencer, Chet Patel remarks, "We knew what our requirements were, and that the VSP G1000 systems were the standout products that could satisfy those needs. Working with our systems integration partner, Tata Consultancy Services, we established that the VSP G1000s could meet our cost, performance and capacity targets. The major challenge was migrating data safely, securely and without any business interruption."

M&S created a shared program team, combining its own in-house business expertise with implementation and migration experts from Hitachi Data Systems Global Services, with additional support from Tata Consultancy Services.

"As a team, we moved the entire storage workload on time, on budget, with no business interruption," says Infrastructure Project Manager at Marks & Spencer, Alex Luboff. "During the process, we identified multiple areas for further rationalization and consolidation, and completed 'good housekeeping'

tasks that helped to further simplify the storage landscape. With help from HDS, we have cut the existing device footprint by around 75%, and saved power, cooling and data center space. Additionally, complexity tends to lead to increased risk, and by consolidating to the VSP G1000 systems, we have dramatically simplified the storage infrastructure."

The Benefits

Solution Ensures Shoppers Stay Satisfied

Over a period of six months, the program included migration of around 750TB of data, accessed by 6,000 virtual machines and 180 IBM® AIX® logical partitions. With the VSP G1000 solution fully live in good time for Christmas 2015, the question was: Would all the food be delivered on time, every time?

Dickson comments, "Not only did we deliver food orders on time every day with the HDS solution, but also the hugely improved technical performance meant that processing overnight food orders regularly beat the deadline by over two hours, a 35% improvement. For our foods business, this released critical contingency time for the suppliers and logistics teams to manage any unforeseen operational issues, greatly reducing business risk and potential food wastage."

He concludes, "Migration to the HDS solution has reduced our storage acquisition costs by more than 30%, and reduced our storage-related operational IT expenses by more than 50%. The simplified landscape is easier to support and manage, yet at the same time delivers increased performance and capacity."



About HDS

Hitachi Data Systems innovates technology for business and social prosperity. Our IT solutions and services drive strategic management and analysis of the world's data. Ask us how we can help you get started. HDS.com.

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