

The Foschini Group Ltd (TFG), one of South Africa's leading retailers, needed a robust storage infrastructure to guarantee high-performance and 24/7 availability of applications for forecasting and customer management. By partnering with Pure Storage®, TFG now has a modern storage infrastructure that is reliable and offers sub-millisecond latencies. In addition, with the Pure Evergreen™ Storage business model and the Pure1® management console, TFG can proactively manage any performance issues and easily scale storage in line with business needs, without any forklift upgrades or disruption to the business.



#### BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

TFG employees now have real-time access to critical data for forecasting and understanding customer buying habits, allowing them to better control inventory and provide high-quality customer shopping experiences.

#### REGION / COUNTRY

ALDN / South Africa

#### INDUSTRY

Retail

“The solution from Pure Storage – with ActiveCluster™ technology – has allowed us to increase our availability to the business by providing a platform that delivers performance, lower latencies, and more bandwidth to our infrastructure than ever before.”

Conrad Roos,  
Senior Department Manager

#### THE CHALLENGE: PLEASING CONSUMERS IN THE DIGITAL ERA

The modern retailer faces battles on multiple fronts. In the warehouse, they want to eliminate unnecessary stock retention without the risk of being unable to fulfill immediate demand. Meanwhile, customers have evolved, becoming more impatient and demanding. Digital natives increasingly represent the majority of consumer bases, and they expect multiple options for engagement – brick-and-mortar presence, online shopping, apps and social media. And, in order to serve these exacting shoppers, employees need to be armed with rich, up-to-the-minute intelligence.

Keeping all these parties (warehouse, customer service and consumers) happy is no mean feat. The kind of information ecosystem required is ideally built on speedy, reliable access to data, delivered by low-latency, high-grade storage that provides quality of performance while offering cost-effectiveness. The competitive nature of retail in the digital age requires careful design of storage architecture to enable the delivery of an always-on solution.

The Foschini Group Ltd (TFG) is a leader in South Africa's clothing-retail segment. The Cape Town-based company has been around for almost a century and has developed a portfolio of 28 fashion brands across several lifestyle and merchandise categories. Members of the stable include American Swiss, Charles & Keith, Fabiani, The FIX, Foschini, G-Star RAW, Hobbs, Markham, SODA Bloc and Totalsports. Merchandise includes clothing, jewelry, mobile phones, accessories, cosmetics, sporting goods, homeware and furniture. More than 4,000 outlets in 32 countries generate annual revenue for the group of around ZAR 34 billion (USD 2.3 billion).

#### ARMING THE EMPLOYEE WITH ACTIONABLE INTELLIGENCE

To empower its more than 23,000 employees with the technology tools they need to build meaningful and lasting relationships with customers while intelligently managing stock levels, the group has a service division called TFG Infotec, which oversees the company's entire IT infrastructure.

“TFG Infotec provides the group with cost-effective, innovative and strategic ICT solutions that are deployed across the group,” said Conrad Roos, Senior Department Manager at TFG. “They operate two well-connected data centres, using leading brand technologies, such as Pure Storage, IBM, HP and Microsoft. Infotec is a very dependable stakeholder to the group, which is critical for us, as IT infrastructure is a vital component of our business. We cannot serve customers effectively or manage inventory efficiently without it.”

**COMPANY:**

The Foschini Group Ltd (TFG)  
[www.tfg.co.za/home](http://www.tfg.co.za/home)

**USE CASE:**

- Database – Microsoft® SQL Server, SAP®, Oracle®, SAS
- VSI – VMware® vSphere®

**CHALLENGES:**

- Legacy infrastructure included a number of disparate storage subsystems with unacceptable latency and response times.

**IT TRANSFORMATION:**

- Performance and availability of business-critical applications improved significantly.
- Pure1 enables IT team to have a holistic view of the Pure Storage infrastructure and gain granular, minute-by-minute control over performance issues.
- The Pure Evergreen Storage business model allows easy scalability without any downtime or disruption in service to business.

“This is the performance level we needed to be at to remain relevant in our operating market.”

Conrad Roos,  
 Senior Department Manager

TFG’s data storage system provides the foundation for its information management. Internal teams rely heavily on low-latency, real-time data access for flexible and timely decision-making. The group’s SAN footprint is just over 4 petabytes, according to Roos, encompassing various primary storage tiers and a backup environment. “We had a number of disparate storage subsystems with unacceptable latency and response times,” he said.

**THE SEARCH FOR RELIABILITY, SCALABILITY AND SPEED**

Roos knew that to improve the performance, reliability and availability of TFG’s storage setup, and remain relevant to the market in the digital age, his team would have to rethink their approach to architecture and procure cost-effective, future-proof technology. During a three-month process that evaluated leading storage providers, including Pure Storage, the group’s decision makers – which included Roos and several storage and infrastructure experts, along with DBAs and other technical specialists – ran proof-of-concept initiatives to determine the best fit for the company. They were drawn to flash technology because of its speed, small footprint, and energy efficiency.

According to Roos, Pure Storage stood out from other vendors on critical issues such as support and compatibility. TFG stakeholders were also struck by the convenience and elegance of the Pure Evergreen Storage ownership model, which allows upgrades and expansions of storage systems to be performed with zero downtime, without performance impact or data migrations, and with protection for their storage investment. Customers deploy their storage solution once and it serves them for a decade or more, growing and modernizing along with their business, utilizing included hardware and software upgrades and trade-in credits.

The main factors, according to Roos, that swayed the procurement team towards Pure Storage were reduced cost of ownership, the Evergreen Right-Size guarantee, performance, scalability, “and most importantly, the simplicity of the product,” said Roos.

**THE FUTURE ARRIVES: AN ALL-FLASH SYSTEM**

With the help of Data Sciences Corporation, the Pure Storage SI partner in the region, TFG deployed two Pure Storage FlashArray™//M50 units, each of which offers up to 220,000 32K IOPS, less than a millisecond of average latency and up to 7 GB/s of bandwidth. The group also uses Pure1 as a dashboard to gain a holistic view of its Pure Storage infrastructure and gain granular, minute-by-minute control over performance issues across its thousands of locations.

“The solution was rolled out at both of our data centres as standalone setups, integrated with our existing infrastructure, which includes Cisco network, HP Blade Centre for the Windows servers, IBM P-Series for Unix servers, and Brocade SAN directors,” Roos said. “We run VMware, SQL, SAP, SAS, Oracle and AIX VIOS workloads on the new flash system. The Pure Storage solution has performed up to TFG’s expectations.”

The deduplication and compression have surpassed TFG’s expectations, leading to a further reduced TCO. This has resulted in TFG obtaining up to 33% additional usable storage, based on the original configuration.

**STAYING RELEVANT IN THE DIGITAL AGE**

With the Pure Storage all-flash solution installed, TFG noticed immediate gains in several key areas. Apart from the cost benefits and scale-up manageability inherent in the Evergreen model, Roos cited several other operational boons.

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“We now have the ability to run critical workloads without having to worry about performance issues or bottlenecks,” he said. “The solution from Pure Storage — with ActiveCluster™ technology — has allowed us to increase our availability to the business by providing a platform that delivers performance, lower latencies, and more bandwidth to our infrastructure than ever before. This is the performance level we needed to be at to remain relevant in our operating market.”

TFG plans to build on the Pure Storage solution by growing its footprint to meet the changing needs of the business, using Pure software features to provide increased availability of systems to employees and the Evergreen model to expand and modernize as required.

“Data Sciences and Pure Storage provided TFG with a solution that significantly improved our overall storage experience for the better, with increased performance, reduced latency and heightened availability,” Roos concluded.



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