

CASE STUDY

Grupo Universal

As part of its continuous quest to strengthen its business, Grupo Universal — the largest insurance company in the Dominican Republic — replaced an aging storage solution with a Pure Storage® FlashArray//X20. Having determined that the legacy storage infrastructure was the primary cause for many operational bottlenecks, the Pure Storage all-flash array made an immediate and dramatic impact; completion times for jobs that previously took 14 hours were slashed to just a few minutes. Power and space requirements have been dramatically reduced, and support team efficiency has soared.

Business Transformation

Grupo Universal is using disruptive technologies from Pure Storage to support the company's commitment to drive growth through innovation, easily expand to support future business growth, and enhance team efficiency.

Challenges

- Remove business impact of poor storage performance
- Replace aged legacy storage system
- Avoid operational disruptions

Solution Benefits

- Performance improved dramatically with greater than 99% decrease in run-time for certain jobs
- The transition was seamless, without any service interruptions
- The solution reduced rack space usage by 90%, from 42U to 4U



Geo

Dominican Republic

Industry

Financial Services

Company

Grupo Universal
www.universal.com.do

Partner

Multicómputos
<https://multicomputos.com>

Use Case

- Full suite of Oracle® applications

Grupo Universal Drives Commitment to Innovation with Deployment of Pure Storage All-Flash Array

Founded in 1964, Grupo Universal is one of the largest and most respected insurance companies in the Dominican Republic. Initially focused on providing a wide selection of insurance-related offerings, the company has expanded its portfolio to include financial services and managed healthcare policies. With almost one in every ten Dominicans subscribing to its services, the company has enjoyed a long history of continuous growth.

A constant factor in Grupo Universal's six-decade-long success story has been the use of technology to drive change. Eduardo Rojas, Vice President of Technology, confirmed, "We are continually reinventing ourselves. We have a company-wide initiative to ensure the technological and digital transformation of all aspects of our operations. Technology is utilized to drive process improvements and enhance the ways we offer products and services to our customers. It is the catalyst for change across the entire company."

Storage Touches Everything

To create the foundation for the company's next 50 years of success, the technical teams began by examining each component of the IT infrastructure. Miguel Raúl González, Director of IT operations for Grupo Universal, elaborated: "Storage was one of the first areas we looked at as it touches every aspect of the business. However, we didn't want to automatically just renew our existing contracts and get bigger, faster drives built on conventional technologies."

Andrés Mauricio Heredia, Director of Architecture and Innovation, added, "We looked for a provider that could give us the necessary speed, flexibility and scalability improvements. It also was important to partner with a company that had the potential to disrupt traditional players in the storage marketplace."

To further increase the urgency of the initiative, the company's aging HPE 3PAR storage system was approaching end-of-life. Additionally, application performance testing had proved that poor storage performance and reliability were badly affecting operations. "It was evident that an investment in a state-of-the-art replacement had the ability to positively impact the whole company," noted González.

Prior to experiencing a flash storage architecture, many people at Grupo Universal viewed storage as just a passive support function. "We looked at all the main players and quickly realized that Pure Storage had the potential to surprise a lot of our colleagues. The concept of storage as a strategic enabler exactly aligned with the company's commitment to using technology to create change," commented Heredia.

A Pure Storage FlashArray™ was configured to emulate key areas of the company's production environment. A team of highly trained engineers from the company worked meticulously onsite, tuning the configuration to optimize performance. "We ran the testing for one week but almost immediately realized that the Pure Storage array was capable of delivering exactly the impact that we needed," recalled Heredia.

“Pure Storage gives us the disruptive technology we were looking for and is unquestionably the ally we needed to change the company’s vision about the role of storage in an enterprise.”

ANDRÉS MAURICIO HEREDIA,
DIRECTOR OF ARCHITECTURE AND
INNOVATION

Seeing is Believing

As with many customers, Grupo Universal team members were very curious to learn just how much of an impact the Pure Storage data compression technologies could really have in their own environment. “We began by loading 80 TB of data onto a 12 TB array and it handled everything perfectly. The compression ratio of about 7:1 was amazing for that volume of information. On top of that, the longer we ran it, the better the ratios,” remarked Heredia. “The Pure Storage team helped us understand that the concept of ‘storage capacity’ is unimportant when evaluating performance specifications.”

A proof of concept also provided the opportunity to experience the ease of migrating data into a Pure Storage environment. González revealed, “The imminent approach of end-of-life for our existing storage system was creating a strong sense of urgency, so we investigated the time and effort it would take to migrate our data. It was very evident that an implementation with Pure Storage was much faster than everything else we had looked at.”

Smooth Path to Widespread Gains

Having completed a thorough evaluation, the decision was made to purchase the Pure Storage FlashArray//X20. Transitioning the entire environment — which handles all the company’s core Oracle-based business applications and data — was completed within two weeks of receiving the array.

Summarizing the deployment, Gonzalez shared, “The ease of migration and speed of the Pure Storage array enabled us to transfer huge amounts of data without any delays. Many people just couldn’t comprehend that we would be able to complete the entire transition in such a short period of time. We were repeatedly asked when the migration was going to begin. We responded, ‘it’s already done!’”

Given the 24/7 nature of many of Group Universal’s services, minimizing downtime was critical. “People’s lives depend on us. For example, if you arrive at a hospital emergency room and you can’t get authorization to be seen, your health can be at risk. Any form of service interruption during the implementation process would have been unacceptable,” emphasized González.

As an organization committed to energy conservation and sustainability, the ability of the FlashArray//X20 to collapse an entire 42U rack of legacy storage components into a compact, power- and space-efficient 4U footprint was extremely well-received.

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“The technology makes it possible to reach previously unattainable levels of performance, reliability and efficiency. What we’ve seen has been incredible. Pure Storage definitely breaks paradigms.”

MIGUEL RAÚL GONZÁLEZ,
DIRECTOR OF IT OPERATIONS

The speed of the Pure Storage array has brought widespread operational gains. “We had processes that used to run for eight days that are now completed in 45 minutes. This type of improvement has also brought benefits at a personal level,” Heredia observed. “In the finance group, for example, the team always had to work late into the night because the processes were very slow. But now, jobs that previously took 14 hours have been reduced to just a few minutes. The positive impact on the quality of people’s lives has been significant.”

The elevated performance of the FlashArray enabled many of Grupo Universal’s data transfer processes, such as the copying of large databases, to be completed in minutes versus multiple hours using the legacy storage drives.

In addition to dramatic performance and operational improvements, the ability to monitor and manage the environment has brought enhanced levels of efficiency and control. “Pure Storage has a very intuitive interface that has greatly simplified our daily operations. A single interface gives us access to all the data we need to optimize processing throughout the environment. This is an immense added value that we just can’t get from other manufacturers,” enthused González.

The use of AI to proactively drive firmware and patch updates ensures that everything is always up to date. The design of the arrays and the supporting processes for managing and monitoring storage have lowered operational risks and enabled the whole team to become far more proactive in their daily roles.

Partnering for the Long-Term

Another important benefit was the ease of upgrading the Pure Storage array. “Even if we move to a higher-level array, we still don’t have to worry about migrating data; the process is completely straightforward. This is yet another capability that’s not offered by any other storage company,” said González.

He added, “When we first started the project, Pure Storage technology was relatively new in the Dominican Republic but through partnerships with respected organizations like Multicómputos, we saw the rapid growth of the partner network and the company’s commitment to keeping systems running at peak performance. Now everyone knows about Pure Storage.”

The radically different approach of Pure Storage has created the need to reexamine traditionally accepted norms throughout the IT world. Heredia explained, “Some of the performance claims initially sounded just too good

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EDUARDO ROJAS,
VICE PRESIDENT OF TECHNOLOGY

to be true, but we proved to ourselves — by throwing our toughest and most complex workloads at the Pure Storage array — that the statements were all very real.

“Pure Storage gives us the disruptive technology we were looking for and is unquestionably the ally we needed to change the company’s vision about the role of storage in an enterprise.”

González concluded, “The technology makes it possible to reach previously unattainable levels of performance, reliability and efficiency. What we’ve seen has been incredible. Pure Storage definitely breaks paradigms.”

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ps_cs_grupo-universal_01

universal.com.do | 1.809.200.1283 | info@universal.com.do

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