Kensington Swan invested in FlashArray™ from Pure Storage® that delivers the performance and reliability necessary to maximize the productivity of its lawyers and staff, minimizes requirements for storage management, and provides a long-range solution for maximizing return on investment.

KensingtonSwan

BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

Lawyers and support staff have fast, reliable access to the files that are essential to serve their clients.

REGION / COUNTRY

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INDUSTRY

Legal

"Pure Storage is the first company to make storage more of a service than a piece of equipment."

Nigel Stevenson,
Chief Information Officer

KENSINGTON SWAN PREVAILS WITH STORAGE-AS-A-SERVICE VERDICT FROM PURE STORAGE

Kensington Swan is a leading New Zealand commercial law firm with over 120 lawyers based in Auckland and Wellington. The firm has a range of practice areas, including construction and major projects, corporate and commercial, M&A, financial markets, and intellectual property. They are also recognized for having a strong Asian business desk (China and Japan) and a Māori business service. They have long been recognized as leaders in gender diversity and currently over a third of their full equity partners and two fifths of the board are female.

The firm's Chief Information Officer, Nigel Stevenson, has a clear focus on the top priorities for the IT infrastructure he oversees. "Our job is to provide high-quality tools and services that enable the lawyers to do their job efficiently and serve their clients in the best way. If there's any loss of access to our systems, they can't meet their clients' needs, which also directly affects the bottom line."

When Stevenson arrived at Kensington Swan in 2016, he found an aging IT infrastructure. "During the global financial crisis, investment dropped off because there was so much uncertainty about the future," he noted, "so we had a lot of systems, especially software, that were getting to be as old as 10 years."

Stevenson led an effort to upgrade virtually all of the firm's IT infrastructure, including virtualized servers, networking, operating and application software, meeting-room technology, and telephony. When it came to storage, Stevenson knew what he had to do. "Two of our old arrays couldn't support the latest version of VMware, so they needed to be replaced."

The firm had HPE 3PAR arrays for its production workloads and HPE P2000 arrays for backup. Stevenson's initial plan was to replace the backup storage units. "But our search for a new backup solution raised a lot of questions about what we were going to do from a data-center infrastructure perspective over the next few years. We looked at both cloud and hardware options." In the end, "we came full circle and instead of buying new backup storage, we decided to turn the 3PAR units into backup and replace the primary storage with something newer, better, faster."

COMPANY:

Kensington Swan
www.kensingtonswan.com

USE CASE:

- Database – Microsoft® SQL Server
- VSI – VMware® vSphere®
- Practice Management: Thomson Reuters Elite 3E
- Document Management: iManage

CHALLENGES:

- Spinning-disk storage had reached end of life, lacked the necessary performance and reliability.
- Legacy storage business model raised costs and failed to deliver an acceptable long-term ROI.

IT TRANSFORMATION:

- There are no more complaints from end-users about slow application performance.
- Non-disruptive upgrades virtually eliminate demands on IT staff.
- Data reduction of 3.2:1 lowers both capital and operating costs.

"We appreciate that all the software functionality is included; if you see a feature, you can just use it."

Alex Mulder, ***ICT Systems Administrator***

MULTIPLE WORKLOADS CONSOLIDATED ON PURE STORAGE

The firm's legacy storage "was performing reasonably well," Stevenson reported, "but spinning-disk technology was old. We wanted to move to solid-state to get rid of moving parts and eliminate the need to replace drives. I also wanted to get away from the typical five-year refresh cycle for storage that vendors imposed. We wanted a longer and more environmentally friendly lifespan for our storage investment."

With the assistance of its system integrator, Datacom Systems Limited, the firm narrowed its search to three vendors: HPE, Dell EMC and Pure Storage. "Each of the solid-state systems would have met our performance requirements," Stevenson said. "So, the decision came down to selecting the most modern technology, the support contracts, the relationship with the people on the ground, and the guidance from our reseller."

Datacom had a Pure Storage FlashArray in its office, "so we went down and took a look at it. We were impressed by the simplicity of the interface and how compact the unit was for the capacity it offered."

Kensington Swan purchased a FlashArray//X20 for its Auckland office. The //X series is a 100% NVMe all-flash array that combines unprecedented performance and capacity density. It supports all of the firm's workloads and applications, including the Thomson Reuters Elite 3E practice-management system, iManage document-management system, Microsoft SQL Server databases, eDiscovery and other applications.

The firm's positive experience with Pure Storage began right away, with installation in late 2018. "The Pure array was up and running in half a day. And migrating the data was very easy; just a VMotion. Within a day the new storage was presented to VMware and was ready to use," said Alex Mulder, ICT Systems Administrator at the firm.

"The speed and ease of installation exceeded our expectations," Stevenson said. "It was a massively positive experience compared to days gone by when we required a three- or four-week project just to get storage connected and in production."

Stevenson added, "It used to be a long and arduous process to get storage installed and configured. I remember installing full racks of shelves and then setting up all the RAID groups, pools and LUNs. With Pure, there's none of that. After some basic configuration, it was good to go."

NON-DISRUPTIVE UPGRADES ELIMINATE MANAGEMENT BURDENS

On an ongoing basis, the IT team at Kensington Swan finds management of the Pure Storage array a remarkably easy task. "We haven't had to do any of the upgrades; it's all done for us," Mulder noted. "I get an email saying an upgrade is ready, we schedule a time, I enable remote access and the Pure support team goes ahead and does it. It's all done during normal work hours, with no interruption in production."

Mulder added, "There's pretty much nothing to administer with Pure Storage. Occasionally I might have to set up a new LUN, but that's a five-second action. It definitely saves us time. And it also saves us operating costs. Our //X20 array takes up just 3U, compared to half a rack for each 3PAR system. And with 3.2:1 data reduction, we get a lot more capacity for the money."

The performance provided by the //X series array "is significantly better than what we were getting with spinning disk," Stevenson reported. "People used to complain frequently that 3E was slow. Now, I don't hear anyone mention it. A few milliseconds improvement in response time may sound small, but when you multiply that by nearly 200 people using those applications throughout the day, it adds up to a significant improvement in productivity."

> "We haven't had to do any of the upgrades; it's all done for us."
>
> Alex Mulder, ***ICT Systems Administrator***

STORAGE AS A SERVICE

Having dealt with storage systems from several vendors over his career in IT, Stevenson said Pure Storage has given him a different perspective.

"Traditionally, storage has been complex to manage and expensive to upgrade. We are a small team, so anything that saves us time is of real value. Pure Storage is the first company to make storage more of a service than a piece of equipment. The ease of installation, the non-disruptive upgrades, the proactive support — all make it an experience that demands very little of us yet delivers superior performance."

When considering new storage options, "We looked at all the cost models — Pure Storage vs. cloud services and other arrays — and Pure was very competitive with the cloud model, especially when you consider the performance we're getting. And with Pure's business model, we can model our costs out to eight or even 10 years. It's highly cost-effective, and you get better performance because it's on-premise instead of being in the cloud."

Another contributor to cost-effectiveness is Pure Storage's all-inclusive array software model, in which all array software features are included in the original price of the equipment. "We appreciate that all the software functionality is included; that you don't have to license a number of SKUs separately. If you need a feature, you can just use it," Mulder said. Stevenson added, "for other systems, adding on a software feature post purchase was always very expensive."

A MEMORABLE SUPPORT EXPERIENCE

About a month after the Pure Storage array was installed at Kensington Swan, the remote-monitoring feature noted a potential issue with the device. "I started getting voicemails and texts from Pure alerting me to the issue," Mulder recalled, "so I called them back. They did a remote check and found that one of the controllers had an issue. It wasn't a matter of losing service, as there was a redundant controller. After trying some remedies unsuccessfully, they sent a technician with a replacement controller, and he was on-site within two hours. An hour later, the new controller was installed, and the firmware updated. And, did I mention that this was on a Sunday during the Christmas holiday?"

Stevenson added, "No one wants to have a problem with equipment, but if there is a fault, then it's quite impressive to have it dealt with so quickly. We were all at the beach enjoying the holiday, and Pure Storage took care of everything. Again, it's storage as a service more than a piece of hardware."

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