PURESTORAGE®

Reynaers is a rapidly expanding producer of aluminum applications for the construction of windows, doors, curtain wall systems, sun awnings, and verandas. All foreign branches connect to the private cloud in the head office. The company is seeing an explosion in its data in parallel with its growth. To address a shortage of available disk space, the company has become the first in Belgium to invest in a Pure Storage® ActiveCluster storage system — user-friendly technology that doesn't require specialized expertise or expensive external consultants.

BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

The Pure Storage FlashArrray™ system resolves Reynaers' capacity issue in its Belgian data centre. It also means there's much less need for external consultancy, and the Pure Evergreen™ storage model safeguards the investment.

REGION / COUNTRY

EMEA / Belgium

INDUSTRY

Manufacturing

"It does everything we hoped, responds extremely quickly, and is very easy to set up."

Patrick Elsen, *ICT Infrastructure Manager*

CAPACITY SHORTAGE FIXED WITH PURE STORAGE ACTIVECLUSTER

Reynaers is one of the world's leading manufacturers of aluminum applications for the construction of windows, doors, curtain wall systems, sun awnings, and verandas. The Belgian company has over 30 branches at home and abroad, all using the private cloud in the data center in Duffel. Rapid growth has resulted in the ICT team experiencing a capacity shortage.

"The previous storage system simply didn't have enough disk space and possibilities for expansion were limited," said ICT Infrastructure Manager Patrick Elsen. "It was a very extensive and technically complicated system, with lots of components and options which we didn't have sufficient knowledge of. This resulted in us often needing external consultancy, which meant we didn't have much confidence in the whole set-up."

The maintenance contract was also due to expire in 2019, and extending it was on the expensive side. It turned out to be cheaper in the medium term to replace the storage infrastructure, even though it hadn't yet fully depreciated. Elsen added, "We're getting a lot back from our planned investment."

The plan was to switch to Pure Storage, a choice advised by our partner Proact. Pure Storage supports the active-active synchronous mirroring for "high availability" — popular in Europe — which is why it was put on the short list.

"There were still no references for ActiveCluster in Belgium, however, so choosing Pure Storage was a bit of a calculated guess," said Elsen. "But our good collaboration with Proact gave us a good perspective of this; we've been collaborating with them for many years, mainly for storage and back-up. The price was also very competitive for an all-flash set up, even after large discounts offered by other providers, and we could get things started with a proof of concept."

FROM POC TO PRODUCTION IN THREE WEEKS

Proact installed the system using plug-and-play rules. "We were able to connect and get started all within a couple of hours, which is very different from how things used to be," said ICT Infrastructure Engineer Sascha De Cuyper.

The POC was ultimately limited to just three weeks, but not because Reynaers was unhappy with the product — on the contrary. "We went into production with Pure Storage much faster than expected, simply because it fully delivered what we expected," explained De Cuyper. "You might wonder if that's a careless approach, but it

USE CASE:

- Database – ERP
- Virtual servers

CHALLENGES:

- The company was limited in storage capacity and expandability.
- External consultancy was required for complex storage management.
- Extending maintenance seemed too expensive.

IT TRANSFORMATION:

- Storage management is back under company control with the switch to Pure Storage.
- Deduplication and compression provides lots of disk space with no impact on performance.
- Upgrades do not cause any downtime.
- High availability is provided by active clustering.
- It is now very easy to add capacity.

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>
> Sascha De Cuyper,
> *ICT Infrastructure Engineer*

just turned out to be a fantastic product. Pure Storage is literally all-in-one, very easy to use, but still with everything you need. And the fact that it only takes up 3U in your data center rack is also very useful. The test phase was so smooth that we migrated a number of our virtual machines to the new storage environment within just three weeks. It's modern storage that caters for modern requirements."

EVERGREEN MAKES THE FUTURE LESS EXPENSIVE

Elsen signed an Evergreen contract with Pure Storage to safeguard Reynaers' investment. This means Reynaers only pays for upgrades or future additions; the initial investment is preserved.

"Everything is running to our full satisfaction following the proof of concept, both in financial and operational terms," said Elsen. "The ICT team from Reynaers is more generalist than specialist, but still tries to do as much as possible itself, which hasn't always been easy in the past. It means our engineers need less external consultancy now, which makes a financial difference and improves confidence."

"You can create a new data store or new LUNs with just a couple of clicks now," said Ben Van den Bergh, Infrastructure Engineer at Reynaers. "We could do this before, too, but it was much more complex. Classic storage methods use lots of parameters, so there's a high margin for error. You always need to choose between fast or slower disks, for example, which isn't necessary with Pure Storage; it's all flash. This means everything works straight away, whereas before we sometimes needed to ask a consultant to come and optimise our distribution. So we all sleep a bit easier now."

COMPRESSION AND DEDUPLICATION BETTER THAN PROMISED

Reynaers initially had some doubts about the Pure Storage FlashArray system's compression and deduplication capacities. Pure Storage promises to compress every 10 GB to 2.94 GB. In practice, the device even seems to perform a bit better with 2.63 GB. AI is indicating to the team that the system needs a few weeks to become more intelligent, partly because more data leads to better compression and deduplication results.

Van den Bergh added, "So it's no empty promise. You can run at full capacity without any loss in performance, which compares well with other manufacturers who ask you to use only 70-80% of the available capacity. The Pure Storage FlashArray system also has a predictive function; it monitors usage and knows when you will reach 100%, so you will automatically be contacted proactively. To put it bluntly, storage isn't really our concern anymore."

FLASHARRAY IS A SERVICE PACKAGED AS HARDWARE

Pure Storage arranges updates with its cloud-based management and support service Pure1®, so Reynaers doesn't even need to check if its storage device is up to date. "All the support we've had so far has been proactive," said Elsen. "Upgrades take place during the day, in the live environment. They simply switch to a different controller in two steps, so the device stays at maximum performance. FlashArray is more a service than hardware."

This means Reynaers has actually built in double high-availability. The device remains active if a controller drops out. And if the device drops out, the other Pure Storage FlashArray takes over the work in the second server room. So both devices are active-active. This high availability is important for Reynaers: the private cloud in Duffel serves all its branches and 2,500 employees.

NOT AT HALF CAPACITY YET

The Pure Storage FlashArray houses some 150 virtual servers, including the ERP database machines, taking up some 40% of the space. Despite usage gradually becoming more intensive, Reynaers is still only using 25% of its performance capacity, response times are less than a millisecond, and there are no peaks anymore.

"The device can easily satisfy demand," said De Cuyper. "I can keep an eye on performance remotely, but I actually only look once a fortnight. It's always fine. If we need extra capacity in the future, we'll be able to expand much more easily."

The switch to Pure Storage has fully resolved the disk space issue. Reynaers dared to pioneer this new storage system technology, and is very enthusiastic about its user-friendliness and performance. "It does everything we hoped, responds extremely quickly, and is very easy to set up," concluded Elsen. "You just set and forget; I've hardly ever seen it like this before."

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