

Visana Services AG, one of the largest Swiss health and accident insurers, updated its storage environment with an all-flash solution from Pure Storage. In a benchmark performance comparison compared to other providers, the Pure Storage solution came out on top with the best price-performance ratio. Visana quickly recognized that the move to Pure Storage FlashArray™ arrays would meet their high-performance requirements of driving high IOPS from individual virtual machines at a consistent low latency.

**BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION**

Energy consumption and space requirements in the data center fell by around 80 percent. Decreasing support requests have reduced support costs by approximately 75 percent. Calculated over six years, the investment and operating costs (CAPEX/OPEX) of the new storage environment will be 50 percent lower than in the previous solution.

REGION / COUNTRY

EMEA / Switzerland

INDUSTRY

Insurance

“The entire experience so far has been 100 percent positive, including implementation, operation, maintenance and performance in practice — everything excellent!”

Christoph Bernhard,
Head of Operations Server & Storage

FIT FOR THE FUTURE — ALL-FLASH STORAGE TO SUPPORT INNOVATIVE IT

Visana Services AG is one of the leading Swiss health and accident insurers for both private customers (individuals and families) and corporate customers (companies, institutions and associations). The company provides loss and accident insurance to its corporate customers. Overall, Visana serves more than 615,000 basic insured individuals. In total, it includes about 1.53 million insured individuals and, in 2017, achieved a premium income of over 3.20 billion Swiss francs with 1,286 employees.

Digitization of business processes and providing the highest quality of needs-based care through a comprehensive service portfolio are priorities for the company. Additionally, Visana Services must comply with legal and compliance requirements in a very regulated market while keeping administrative costs as low as possible, also through the use of efficient IT.

With the backbone of its IT infrastructure — the storage environment — reaching the end of its lifecycle, Visana decided to purchase an all-flash-based storage solution to support its innovative IT strategy. As part of its evaluation process, the company looked at the Pure Storage solution from partner BNC Business Network Communications AG. In a benchmark performance comparison compared to five other providers, the Pure Storage solution came out on top with the best price-performance ratio. Visana quickly recognized that the move to Pure Storage FlashArrays would meet their high-performance requirements of driving high IOPS from individual virtual machines at a consistent low latency. In addition, Visana was also impressed with the intuitive Pure1® application.

FLASH ENVIRONMENT — SMOOTH IMPLEMENTATION, EXCEEDED EXPECTATIONS

The solution included two FlashArray//M70 R2s and a FlashArray//M10 R2, providing plenty of IO performance and superior bandwidth for a consolidated application environment with VMware virtual machines, and less than 1ms average latency. There were no issues with the implementation of the storage arrays, and the project was in production within a month. Visana runs a mixed workload environment with Oracle databases and ERP systems from SAP. All these business-critical applications access the same centralized storage environment, which has been running smoothly even after several upgrades without interruption.

According to Christoph Bernhard, Head of Operation Server & Storage at Visana Services AG, “Pure Storage has met our expectations for availability and even exceeded those for data reduction with a rate of 4:1. This also applies to the very low latency of 0.4ms on average. The installation was very easy and very fast, and we did not need external help. So far, the entire experience has been 100 percent positive — implementation, operation, maintenance, performance in practice — everything top!”

COMPANY:

Visana Services AG
www.visana.ch

USE CASE:

- Virtual Desktop Infrastructure – VMware® Horizon
- Database – Oracle®
- Application – SAP

CHALLENGES:

- Deploy an up-to-date storage solution to replace the previous storage platform that has reached the end of its lifecycle.
- Achieve better storage performance.
- Reduce support demand and operating costs.

IT TRANSFORMATION:

- An average latency of less than 1ms provided performance optimization for faster application access.
- The company achieved significantly lower energy and space requirements with a high data reduction rate of 4:1, and reduced storage management costs, resulting in efficient data center operations.
- Purity ActiveCluster enabled an Active/Active metro cluster with two synchronous locations. This configuration enables synchronous replication and non-disruptive site-to-site failover, including automatic recovery, increasing the availability of mission-critical IT resources.

“Pure Storage has kept all promises and fulfilled them. The key technical advantages in doing business are speed, comfort and simplicity.”

Christoph Bernhard,
 Head of Operations Server & Storage



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Storage management is provided by the cloud-based software-management layer Pure1 and the Pure Web GUI. Via Pure1 cloud, Pure Storage provides proactive capacity and utilization monitoring, four-hour on-site support with 15-minute Sev1 response times, reporting, managed upgrades and expansions, and simple billing. There are no special licenses or activations of additional features necessary, so Visana benefits from every software feature innovation. As the foundation of Pure1, Pure1 Meta continuously scans the telemetric data from all Pure installations and uses predictive analytics through machine learning to help troubleshoot potential issues and optimize workloads.

Pure Storage’s operating environment Purity makes remote support extremely easy. It was designed from the ground up for storage systems that are equipped with SSDs and optimized for their use. As a result, Pure Storage is clearly different from other storage manufacturers, whose operating systems are geared to the use of classic hard drives. Purity provides inline deduplication and compression to conserve SSD resources.

Availability was also very important to Visana, and with the Pure Storage solution, all extensions and updates are made during operation. The system can maintain 100 percent of its performance while a controller is updating and storage capacity and even controllers can be upgraded at any time during operation. In addition, the system automatically detects the extensions and integrates them without manual intervention.

In Bern, Visana also operates a second data center to maintain geo-redundancy. The deployment of the two arrays at two separate sites in Bern was implemented with Purity ActiveCluster. Thanks to the symmetric Active/Active configuration, read and write IOs can be performed on the same volume from both sides of the mirror. A non-disruptive failover (transparent failover) between the synchronous arrays/sites, including automatic recovery, is also possible. Administrative activities, such as provisioning, snapshots and cloning, can also be performed from both sides of the mirror, which facilitates continuous business operations.

SOLUTION CONVINCES IN QUANTITATIVE AND QUALITATIVE TERMS

Today, Visana operates a top-performing storage system, achieving a latency of less than 1ms. The total cost of ownership for the storage environment decreased from CHF 280,000 to 90,000 per year. Energy consumption and space requirements in the data center fell by around 80 percent. What used to fill four standard racks is now situated in less than one-quarter rack. By reducing the need for support, especially since most of the work, such as upgrades, can be done remotely, Visana was able to reduce related costs by around 75 percent. Calculated over six years, Visana reduced the investment and operating costs (CAPEX/OPEX) for their storage environment by 50 percent.

Another plus is the Pure Evergreen™ Storage model. Evergreen is a pay-per-use offering that marks the arrival of enterprise-class storage-as-a-service for your block, file, and object workloads. It is designed for OPEX storage consumption that delivers the elastic flexibility benefits of public cloud, coupled with the resiliency, security, performance, and cost-effectiveness of enterprise-grade all-flash private cloud infrastructure.

“The Pure Storage Flash environment is not just packed with numbers, it’s simplicity, especially when it comes to upgrades. The Remote Assistant is very easy to use and offers excellent clarity. Everything is faster overall. There is hardly anything where we see the need for optimization,” praised Bernhard. “Pure’s key technical advantages in business operations are speed, convenience and simplicity. The high performance and low operating costs are also impressive, especially to Visana’s head of IT and the CIO. The acquisition of Pure Storage and the cooperation with the Pure Storage partner BNC have had a significant impact on the overall business of Visana Services AG. Best of all, Pure and BNC have kept their promises and even exceeded them.”