PURESTORAGE®

ALOM Technologies depends on the peak performance of its custom applications to execute hundreds of thousands of orders daily and deliver optimal service levels to its global client base. Legacy spinning-disk storage technology started imposing high CAPEX and OPEX costs while impacting its IT staff's ability to efficiently develop, test and roll out vital new projects. With the introduction of FlashArrays from Pure Storage, ALOM's VDI infrastructure and core applications run much faster, administration resources have been radically reduced and time-to-market cycles for new application development initiatives have been accelerated dramatically.

BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

Users throughout the company are beneficiaries of faster application performance and webfacing access times to improve organizational productivity.

GEO

Global business with storage management out of North America

INDUSTRY

Supply Chain Management

"There's a whole set of applications we have been able to deploy because of Pure."

Aaron Katske, *director of IT*

ALOM TECHNOLOGIES FUTURE-PROOFS STORAGE INFRASTRUCTURE WITH PURE STORAGE

ALOM Technologies is a supply-chain management and third-party logistics provider that designs and executes supply chain solutions for Fortune 100 companies to optimize how products are manufactured and brought to market. The company provides a turnkey, end-to-end solution to a customer's supply-chain needs, all the way from purchasing to product delivery worldwide.

Understandably, IT plays a pivotal role in the company's worldwide operations. ALOM IT Director, Aaron Katske, is justifiably proud of the contributions his department makes to the success of the company. "We host and run all of our own systems," he says. "We have no cloud applications. We develop and host everything from customer-facing websites to advanced custom applications. In fact, we develop most of our business-critical apps ourselves."

With such a capable team, Katske knows how to evaluate vendors, and that was especially true when it came time to upgrade his storage infrastructure. "We experienced the traditional storage vendor timeline," he says. "The first year is fantastic. The second year you have to buy more shelves. And the third year they hit you with, 'it's time to do maintenance, and the maintenance is two-thirds the cost of buying a new array, so here's your forklift'."

Facing such a choice in mid-2014, Katske recalls, "we considered that approach very seriously." But he also took the impending forklift upgrade as an opportunity to consider alternatives. Together with his value-added reseller, KIS, he considered proposals from five suppliers, including his incumbent vendor and Pure Storage. "It was a "chore" to work with the legacy storage system, Katske recalls, "so when the financials suggested it was time to replace it, we wanted to find the best product to meet our technical and long-term strategic objectives. When we did the comparison, Pure emerged as the leader because it delivers the most future-proof technology, hands down."

LONG-TERM ROI, EASE OF MANAGEMENT KEY ELEMENTS IN DECISION

Along with technical superiority, Katske says, the two most important factors in favor of Pure were ease of management and long-term return on investment. "We are a lean IT shop, and we don't have a dedicated storage administrator. With our previous vendor, I spent a lot of time learning how to be a storage admin, when that was a very small part of my job. We are much better at managing VMware than we are storage, so the simplicity of managing Pure within the VMware environment is a huge benefit."

COMPANY:

ALOM Technologies
www.alom.com

USE CASE:

• VDI – VMware

• Database – MS SQL

CHALLENGES:

• Management of legacy storage system demanded constant attention from lean IT staff

• New IT projects required 3-5 weeks of storage readiness evaluation before they could be rolled out for production

• More storage capacity had to be purchased every six months

IT TRANSFORMATION:

• Multiple-database query time cut from 2 minutes to 8 seconds

• Internal custom applications realize 2x performance gains

• IT staff liberated from tedious storage management to pursue strategic new projects

• Storage costs no longer a consideration in evaluating new project rollouts

"For the money, I don't think there is a better long-term all-flash array than Pure Storage."

Aaron Katske, *director of IT*

Despite aggressive pricing proposals from competing vendors, Katske says, Pure delivered the most attractive financial offering over the long term, thanks to its Evergreen Storage program, which provides non-disruptive replacement of controllers, at no cost, for the life of the customer's relationship with Pure. "The ROI in year 7 really was the difference between Pure and the others," Katske says. "It was the crucial tipping point, because we choose to take a long-term view of our most strategic IT investments.".

BETTER PERFORMING APPLICATIONS BOOST COMPANY PRODUCTIVITY

Katske didn't have to wait long to see the benefits of choosing Pure. Having purchased two FlashArrays – one for the main data center in Fremont, California, and another for the company's backup site – ALOM initially moved a third of its virtual desktops onto Pure. "We could tell the difference right away," Katske says, "The desktops that were on Pure were much faster and far more responsive." The wholesale move to Pure was so simple that the entire VDI infrastructure was migrated to the new storage platform in less than a month.

"The VDI performance difference has been huge," Katske notes.

ALOM's most storage-dependent applications serve internal users, and Katske heard positive comments as soon as Pure was installed. "Everybody in the company has noticed that our intranet runs faster; probably twice as fast as it used to. Pure has been supersuccessful with (Microsoft) SharePoint. It's just blazingly fast. It even allows us to put less memory on each desktop machine, so we get more performance at lower memory cost."

Katske says the major performance improvements from Pure are seen in the company's routine intranet and database applications. "Our applications are designed to hit the database directly, with no caching, so the sub-millisecond latency delivered by Pure helps us get to the database really fast. It's allowing our account managers to find answers faster, and that helps them be more productive with customers."

One example of improved performance, he says, is a routine query that hits multiple databases. It used to require two minutes to run, but now is completed in 7 seconds – a 94% reduction.

SIMPLIFIED MANAGEMENT MEANS MORE GETS DONE IN LESS TIME

While users throughout the company see the impact of Pure's high performance, the biggest impact has been in the IT department. Katske cites four major benefits:

First, the reliability and performance of Pure arrays has eliminated storage as a possible source of system problems. "From a strategic IT perspective, not having to worry about storage is a huge benefit. The words 'what's wrong with the Pure?' never come out of my mouth."

Second, the simplicity of managing Pure means anyone on the IT staff can manage storage, and a separate headcount for a storage administrator is avoided, as is the need for specialized training.

Third, "the bang for the buck from de-dupe and compression is top-notch." Depending on the database and application, ALOM is seeing data-compression rates as high as 9:1, and in no case less than 4:1. That means ALOM has enough storage in place to cover growth over at least the next three years, whereas with its previous system it was buying new shelves every six months. In addition, the high data-compression rates mean storage availability is never an issue when the IT team wants to begin a new application development project. "It means we haven't had to buy separate de-duping hardware, and it allows us to do local native snapshots. Now, there's nothing in our infrastructure that doesn't get backed up."

Fourth, replication between the arrays in the two data centers is quick and simple. "With most vendors, replication can be more complex than managing the storage itself. But with native replication in Pure, it's three clicks and the data is flowing."

"From a strategic IT perspective, not having to worry about storage is a huge benefit."

Aaron Katske, *director of IT*

CAPEX AND OPEX SAVINGS ADD UP

ALOM has already identified savings made possible by the Pure arrays. Capital spending on storage hardware upgrades is avoided, standalone de-duping or replication equipment is unnecessary, and desktop memory is actually reduced. And from an OPEX standpoint, there's no longer a need for a dedicated storage administrator or specialized storage-system management training.

Having moved to Pure, Katske says, it is much easier and faster to undertake critical IT projects that will improve operations and give ALOM added competitive advantage. With its previous storage system, "we had to re-architect storage every time we had a new project, and that could take three to five weeks. But with Pure, we don't have that problem. There's a whole set of applications we have been able to deploy with much greater efficiency because of Pure. We are deciding on new applications on the merits of the project, not on the underlying storage hardware."

For Katske, return on investment is the bottom line. "The ROI – both from a dollar perspective over the life of the array, and in terms of performance and application usage – is top-notch. For the money, I don't think there is a better long-term all-flash array than Pure Storage."

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