For digital cinema company Arts Alliance Media, storage is incredibly important – it has around 30,000 cinema screens around the world from which it needs to pull data that allows the software it builds to function. Spinning disks couldn't do the job – only flash has the performance needed to process its information. Arts Alliance Media chose Pure Storage's enterprise flash array, with fantastic results that has saved the company around £1 million.

Arts Alliance Media

BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION

Providing the power needed to cope with massive customer data demands from 30,000 cinema screens around the world, saving around £1 million.

GEO

United Kingdom

INDUSTRY

Media

> "In my view, spinning disks are dead. The performance requirements we have from some of our models and applications is massive, and flash was the only way we could get the performance we needed."
>
> Louis Farnham, *Technical Architect*

ARTS ALLIANCE MEDIA NEEDED MORE SPEED WITH ITS STORAGE. PURE WAS THERE TO PROVIDE IT.

Arts Alliance Media provides software which is needed to manage the whole end-to-end experience of a digital cinema. This includes the development of software needed to perform actions like queuing and playing movies, adverts and centralised management of a cinema estate.

Although based in London, Arts Alliance Media is global, providing software for cinemas worldwide. It has worked with UK chains like Cineworld and Picturehouse, as well as international chains like UCI in Europe and Golden Duck in South East Asia, as well as hundreds of independents.

With around 30,000 cinema screens on its books, the amount of data that Arts Alliance Media needs to pull from sites around the world is huge. Storage is one of the most important parts of its business – speed is of the essence when it comes to loading pages or getting queries to run. But Arts Alliance Media's SAN storage in Dell Equalogic wasn't doing the job well enough.

"We had two flavours of Dell EqualLogic," said Louis Farnham, Technical Architect at Arts Alliance Media. "One hybrid (SSD and SATA), and one 10k SAS. The 10k SAS was fit for purpose – the latency was good, but that's because it was specifically purchased for a particular purpose."

"But with the hybrid, performance was terrible. The issue was latency and whilst there were spikes at times, average latency was between 10 to 15ms. Performance in terms of read and write input wasn't up to scratch. Some queries took hours to run – ideally they should take seconds."

FLASH IS THE ONLY WAY TO GO – SPINNING DISKS ARE DEAD, CLOUD TOO EXPENSIVE.

Looking at Arts Alliance Media's storage needs, Louis realised that flash was the only solution. He said, "In my view, spinning disks are dead. The performance requirements we have from some of our models and applications is massive, and flash was the only way we could get the performance we needed."

"It wouldn't matter how many hard disks we had – we could have thousands set up in a RAID array and it still wouldn't be fast enough. Cloud-wise, Amazon Web Services didn't have enough performance and would have been horrendously expensive."

COMPANY:

Arts Alliance Media
www.artsalliancemedia.com

USE CASE:

• Running SQL databases and web apps

CHALLENGES:

• Managing massive amounts of global customer data

• Existing spinning disk technology wasn't matching requirements

• Only flash had the potential to match Alliance Media's demands for high performance, availability and ease of management

• With the required workloads, hybrid disk performance from Dell was 'terrible'

IT TRANSFORMATION:

• Significant cost savings from energy expenditure

• Some applications run 150 times faster than previously, resulting in increased financial productivity and a reduction in administration and maintenance

• Deduplication means Arts Alliance Media can handle more data without having to increase the amount of flash storage, decreasing its storage cost

• SQL databases no longer require periodic restarts, saving time and money spent on IT support

"The performance difference is huge – I can push ten times the amount of read and write throughput, plus twenty times the amount of IOPS. Pure runs far quicker – it all runs at sub 2ms, while before I had a tenth of that performance."

Louis Farnham, *Technical Architect*

After looking at vendors like Dell, EMC and Tintri, Arts Alliance Media turned to Pure Storage, purchasing a FlashArray FA-420. Arts Alliance Media were able to trial hardware beforehand, and the actual installation took less than half a day.

"I worked very closely with two members of staff at Pure – a Proof of Concept box was supplied to us. It was all key in my decision making process," Louis added.

PURE STORAGE PROVIDES RELIABLE, HIGHLY EFFICIENT, AND INCREASED PRODUCTIVITY FOR GROWTH.

Arts Alliance Media customers and staff are now benefiting both directly and indirectly from Pure Storage, with performance orders of magnitude better than what it had previously. In testing, some database queries were running an incredible 150 times faster, with deduplication meaning the number of customers it can handle has increased massively.

"The scalability is important," said Louis. "We're moving away from what we did when I first started, which was movie mastering, digital cinema delivery and content distribution. We're now a software company, and that has significant demands which our systems need to handle."

At the current time, the company's FlashArray runs systems like SQL Server 2008R2, MySQL and SQL Server Reporting Services, as well as PostgreSQL. In the past with its previous storage, SQL databases would need to be restarted, costing time and money. With the FlashArray, Arts Alliance Media has eliminated SQL restarts, allowing IT to focus on other important projects.

Louis said of Pure's FlashArray, "The performance difference is huge – I can push ten times the amount of read and write speed, plus twenty times the amount of IOPS. Pure runs far quicker – it all runs at sub 2ms, while before I had a tenth of that performance."

"The deduplication is massive to us. Most businesses when they scale out storage they need to think linearly – so if there's a requirement for 50 terabytes of storage, you need to buy 50 terabytes. With Pure you don't necessarily need to buy that much – it averages a three to one deduplication ratio."

"With maintenance – previously we had to forklift storage hardware for support, which is a big project and piece of work. With Pure, they swap out your controllers for free every three years as long as you're in support, so effectively what you've bought continues to run. It doesn't become an old legacy piece of kit we need to worry about."

Louis said Pure Storage has helped fix its own products. For instance, with one product, the improved storage has saved it over 18 months of development work. The company doesn't have to worry about how efficiently applications are written, leaving it to focus on making them great.

"Pure is the best storage you can buy," Louis said. "If that product took six developers 18 more months to work on it, we're talking a saving of hundreds of thousands of pounds plus all the work around testing it. If you're looking at how much we saved, we're talking a million pounds or more saving."

PURESTORAGE®

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