Business Solutions Powered by DataCore™

Bundesverband der Arbeiterwohlfahrt

The Business

Bundesverband der Arbeiterwohlfahrt (AWO) is a national industrial welfare association. Founded in 1919 as "Hauptausschuss für Arbeiterwohlfahrt," AWO is now one of the six largest centralised workers' welfare associations in Germany. With 140 employees working at its headquarters in Bonn, AWO provides welfare services related to social, health, family and employment issues through a network of offices located throughout Germany.

AWO is an independent organisation funded by membership subscription, private and public donations and fees for services, which can be provided on an individual basis. Through constant evolution and adoption of sound business management principles, the organisation has developed into a significant service provider and has to compete with other companies offering similar services in the open market.

The Challenge

AWO's Bonn headquarters houses the IT data centre where a heterogeneous server environment, including Windows NT and 2000, Novell Netware and Linux, runs file, web, database and email services. These servers were equipped with direct attached local storage that was becoming increasingly inefficient, requiring excessive administration and contributing to too much downtime. Anticipating significant but un-predictable future growth in data volumes, AWO decided to investigate SAN environments, which would guarantee a higher level of data availability and more efficient and scalable storage management.

In cooperation with CEMA AG, their integration partner, AWO designed and implemented a storage architecture based on a mainframe model to centralise data by exploiting a SAN storage solution. What was needed was a management platform to provide high availability, minimize administration overhead and guarantee flexibility for adoption of future growth and technologies.

The Solution

Having evaluated CEMA's recommendation, AWO chose to implement DataCore Software's SANsymphony™ storage networking software. SANsymphony controls access to all the data in the SAN, providing efficient and flexible storage allocation with advanced caching technologies delivering performance improvements when compared to the previous direct attached storage environment. By implementing DataCore's Network Mirroring with Alternate Path failover, AWO can also ensure data availability and business continuity in the event of component failure in the SAN. The snapshot feature enables integration with the backup environment and the whole solution is managed from a single, centralised console.

"With SANsymphony we have chosen a storage platform, that guarantees nearly 100% outage protection. Also important to us is the potential for cost savings, as we are releasing storage and administrative resources and have maximum flexibility when extending our storage system," says Christian Prasser, IT Manager.

AWO at a glance

Business -
Provision of welfare services

Main Requirements -
Higher flexibility, scalability and reliability through storage consolidation and centralised management. Backup optimisation

Environment -
Dell PV660F storage arrays, Brocade SAN switches. Windows NT, Windows 2000, Novell Netware 6 and Linux application servers

DataCore Solution -
SANsymphony Network Edition with Network Mirroring, Alternate Path high availability and Snapshot

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An Interview with AWO, Germany

What problems were you looking to solve with a SAN solution?

We were looking for a higher degree of reliability, better and more efficient storage management and flexibility. Data growth at AWO is not predicable, although we do know it will occur, so we needed a secure solution, but one that was open and flexible enough to meet future needs.

How did you learn about DataCore?

We first learned about DataCore and SANsymphony through a recommendation from our SAN implementation consultants CEMA AG, who is one of DataCore's partners in Germany. They described to us how SANsymphony works and how its features could help us easily to resolve our storage management problems.

Which other solutions were considered? How long was the selection process?

We had been considering a NAS based solution, but having looked at SANsymphony it appeared to offer the capabilities we required to meet our needs for optimising administration and storage resources whilst providing a more scalable environment that would suit future changes in our environment. The selection process was very short, as we needed to implement a solution quickly.

Why did you choose a DataCore solution?

SANsymphony provides an independent solution for management of our heterogeneous server and storage environment. It offers a very open solution, which delivers the scalability required to meet future storage growth, and also provides us with more flexibility for dealing with data security, backup and restore.

What is your environment?

SANsymphony SDS nodes are Fujitsu Siemens servers. We are using Brocade SAN switches and PV660F storage subsystems from Dell. We are running applications such as Oracle databases, web and file and print services on Windows 2000, Windows NT, Novell Netware 6 and different Linux application servers.

What are you doing with your SANsymphony installation? What are you managing?

SANsymphony provides a centralised virtual storage pool for our application servers. It enables us to deliver storage on demand to various applications serving about 140 users in a controlled environment.

How much storage are you planning to manage with SANsymphony?

At the moment we are managing approximately 200 GB of storage, however this is expected to grow to about 500 GB and it is the ability to handle this growth that is one of SANsymphony's key advantages.

What do you think are the advantages of SANsymphony?

Security of data is a very important factor for AWO. By using SANsymphony we can be assured that the data is very secure through use of functions such as Snapshot or Alternate Pathing. Another key aspect is the fact that SANsymphony is very open ended in that it imposes no specific limit to the size of any storage environment because it scales very well. This scalability is very important to us.

What cost savings do you expect to realise through implementation of SANsymphony?

Administrative costs for storage management have decreased by about 30 per cent and we have the opportunity to use lower cost disk-arrays and minimize downtime. Additionally we are able to freely choose further equipment, so we can react flexibly to the market as well to our demands - resulting in cost savings of several hundred thousand Euros in the long run.

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