Success Story

NetApp Helps AMEC Cut Reliance on Tape and Disaster Proof the Business

CUSTOMER PROFILE
AMEC plc. (www.amec.com) was created in 1988, when original parent companies William Press and Fairclough merged and eventually bought the Matthew Hall Group. This resulted in a company with over 20,000 employees spread across the UK, America, and Europe.

AMEC’s early history was rooted in the construction sector. Today AMEC provides managed services, consultancy, and engineering to energy, power, and process industries. The company’s offering includes designing, delivering, and maintaining strategic assets for companies such as Shell and BP.

THE CHALLENGE
Centralize storage and create a disaster recovery site
In mid 2006, AMEC’s IT department took a close look at the company’s UK data center setup and realized that there were many improvements it could make to cut costs and improve efficiency. A new storage platform would be key to achieving these goals.

At the time, IT had little central control over storage. Although it was making database backups, it was doing so in individual outposts of the company, making it hard for the technical team to have visibility across the entire IT portfolio. The company also acknowledged that it needed to improve disaster recovery, which would involve reorganizing how work was shared between the two data centers.

“We were in a situation where our two data centers were active. We wanted to designate one as the active center and transition the other one into a backup site for disaster recovery. We also wanted to move all backups out of the active data center and do these in the passive data center. This strategy was tied to a move to VMware that we were also making at about this time. We realized that it would be far better for us to focus on making the primary data center and main production system even more resilient and have a second site as backup,” says Andy Chisnall, technical specialist, Global Infrastructure, AMEC.

The team hoped that having one smaller, passive data center would lead to cost savings. Reducing its reliance on tape was also a key objective behind the changes.

THE SOLUTION
Improve scalability and reliability with NetApp and VMware
AMEC’s data storage was reaching its capacity. The team’s existing HP EVA systems had reached the limits of their scalability, and AMEC didn’t feel the systems could
provide the control needed to accommodate future growth. “We looked at EMC because we had a contract for desktops and servers with Dell. We also looked at Pillar Data Systems, but we discounted that option fairly quickly because it was still very new. The value-add components such as SnapManager® for Exchange and the ability for cloning and mirroring made NetApp stand out from the competition,” says Chisnall.

In the end, Chisnall’s team chose NetApp FAS systems because they offered the product scalability and reliability needed. NetApp also provided crucial compatibility with VMware and Exchange, which was a key component of AMEC’s plans to redesign its data centers and implement storage-level replication.

BUSINESS BENEFITS
Reclaim control, improve data protection, and support growth
NetApp has enabled AMEC to resolve its overdependency on tape and regain control of its storage environment. With the data all stored in one place, it is much easier to manage, particularly using NetApp Operations Manager for managing distributed storage infrastructure.

“We now have a central view of our data center environment, thanks to NetApp Operations Manager,” says Chisnall. “We have gained transparency, and it’s easy for us to now see where data growth is happening. We simply couldn’t see that in the past. Previously, all we could see was that a server was running out of space, but now our understanding is much deeper and more sophisticated.”

With AMEC’s automatic replication of data to the newly established disaster recovery data center, the IT team can now limit tape backup to once a week. Backups are also undertaken in the disaster recovery data center, which reduces the load on production when running.

“We’ve raised confidence in our ability to recover data, and we’re getting feedback from the business that availability and performance have increased, particularly in Aberdeen. For the most part what goes on in the data center is unnoticed by the business, and that’s how it should be,” notes Chisnall.

The scalability of the NetApp systems also gives AMEC confidence in its ability to grow without putting a strain on its data center or storage.

“Rearchitecting our data center with NetApp has given us access to all of our data in one place and enabled easy automatic replication off-site. In terms of ROI, we’ve achieved substantial cost savings simply from the fact that we can now limit backup to once a week. Overall, NetApp has reduced the time and effort needed for IT staff to manage storage and checking and testing tapes from remote sites,” says Chisnall.

NetApp creates innovative storage and data management solutions that accelerate business breakthroughs and deliver outstanding cost efficiency. Discover our passion for helping companies around the world go further, faster at www.netapp.com.

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