HGC improves operational efficiency with modern unified storage

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To cost-efficiently meet its global expansion needs and maintain high performance, HGC digitally transformed with NetApp AFF.

HGC Global Communications Limited (HGC) is a leading technology company that provides comprehensive telecom, data center, and broadband services. Macroview Telecom, the digital technology solutions arm under HGC Group, is a leading ICT solution provider in the market. Headquartered in Hong Kong with 25 overseas offices and business in over 5 continents, HGC continues to scale up its infrastructure in its global base of operations while expanding internationally. With the company's business expansion plan, HGC expects to see exponential growth of data and wants to harness that data more effectively. However, like many enterprises, HGC has faced challenges in refreshing and scaling its mission-critical applications, including human resources and finance management, the billing portal, and VDI services, while maintaining operational excellence.

"Now we have a best-in-class solution to meet our continuous demands for capacity, performance, and data protection. With NetApp in place, our teams can spend more time and resources on business development and innovations."

Eli Ngai
Chief Information Officer, HGC

Increasing demands for capacity, performance, and data protection

The tremendous influence from the ICT industry to strive for better performance, increased globalization, and more personalization continues to shape the way that HGC conducts business and innovates. With its global business expansion, HGC faced the challenge of scaling its infrastructure, which is the backbone for 20 mission-critical applications that support teams in customer operations, engineering, finance, and human resources. "HGC has faced massive growth over the past couple of years. Our businesses have increasing demands for capacity, performance, and data protection," said Eli Ngai, chief information officer at HGC. The company therefore embarked on a digital transformation journey, examining solutions to modernize and to improve its current operations.

Modern unified storage

To meet its long-term business development goals, HGC needed modern unified storage that could simplify management and help the company meet future business requirements. So, HGC turned to NetApp. As Ngai explains, "NetApp is our trusted partner and a market leader in storage. With the help of Macroview's managed services, we consolidated all of our business data on a NetApp storage system. We can now easily manage multiple vendors, save on equipment costs, and free up our staff from routine and repetitive tasks," said Ngai.

HGC chose NetApp® AFF systems to deliver modern unified storage that supports different protocols, such as SAN for block storage and NAS for file storage. AFF all-flash systems also support HGC's different workloads and strategies. "We can now provision storage in just minutes to improve our speed and responsiveness for critical business applications," said Ngai.

NetApp AFF maintains high performance for HGC's most demanding workloads, and NetApp FlexClone® technology delivers high efficiency for business-critical data storage. "With FlexClone, we can instantaneously create space-efficient copies for IT operations. Also, the management tool helps to automate common storage tasks, which simplifies our operations and saves our team a lot of time," said Ngai. With a single click, HGC can easily provision and rebalance workloads by monitoring clusters and nodes, as well as upgrade the OS and firmware. The storage configuration is also optimized and protected by predictive analytics, fueled by NetApp's massive user base, artificial intelligence (AI), and machine learning (ML).

Protected and faster business-critical data

"The data storage and backup facilities in our corporate environment have become increasingly complex. The old backup facilities required backup operators to carry out the complicated process and tedious operations, which made operations and management increasingly difficult," said Ngai. "We therefore chose NetApp to simplify our backup process and to meet our continuous data protection enhancement strategies."

NetApp Snapshot™ technology securely creates near-instantaneous, space-efficient copies of data on secondary storage without disruption and with minimal performance overhead. HGC can instantly access copies of business-critical data to recover from accidental deletion, corruption, or other adverse modifications of its data. On top of that, HGC uses these copies to speed up multiple business functions, such as business intelligence, development, and testing without any effect on the production system.

Business continuity and disaster recovery strategies

To promote business continuity, enterprises like HGC must have an effective data protection strategy. "Such a critical infrastructure requires zero data loss and needs system recovery in minutes rather than hours," said Ngai. To meet this need, NetApp MetroCluster is a high-availability and disaster recovery feature of NetApp ONTAP® that combines array-based clustering with synchronous replication. MetroCluster meets the strictest SLAs—with a zero recovery point objective (RPO) and a recovery time objective (RTO) of less than 2 minutes—which has helped HGC prevent data loss from unplanned outages.

Outages can result from a loss of power, cooling, or network connectivity; a storage array shutdown; or operational error. If services are suddenly interrupted, HGC can spin up a disaster recovery site in minutes instead of hours. MetroCluster eliminates the need for complex failover scripts, server reboots, or application restarts. HGC now manages the disaster site as a single entity, eliminating duplicate administrative work and maintaining configuration consistency.

Reduced overall storage costs

With NetApp AFF, HGC has optimized its capacity savings and has lowered its overall TCO. Inline data reduction technologies such as deduplication, compression, and compaction have made HGC's SSD storage at least 5 times smaller. Native space efficiency with cloning and Snapshot copies has helped the company achieve even more substantial space savings—without affecting performance— enabling HGC to purchase the least amount of storage capacity necessary. HGC has also reduced its overall TCO by simplifying IT operations and by saving on power, cooling, and rack space compared with traditional storage.

Future-proof solution for innovation

NetApp AFF and ONTAP offer unparalleled flexibility and scalability to support HGC's business expansion plans. And with the help of Macroview as a consulting partner, HGC is future-ready for different business requirements such as building a hybrid cloud with any leading cloud provider and running AI and ML applications. "Now we have a best-in-class solution to meet our continuous demands for capacity, performance, and data protection," said Ngai. "With NetApp in place and with help from Macroview, our teams can spend more time and resources on business development and innovations. We are looking forward to innovating on behalf of our customers and creating value for them."

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