



Business challenge

Rapid business growth was putting a strain on Fransabank's core systems. How could the bank ensure that key overnight processing would not overrun and impact on performance during the working day?

Transformation

With a new core banking system running on IBM® Power® 870 servers with IBM DS8870 and IBM FlashSystem® storage, Fransabank speeds through batch processing and keeps systems responsive to customer needs.



Roland Tabib
Chief Information Officer and Head of the ICT & Projects division, Fransabank Group

Business benefits

40% boost

in performance for start-of-day processing

Saved >3h

every night, eliminating risk of batch processes overrunning

Cut >5h

from end-of-month financial consolidation, accelerating insight

Fransabank

Delighting customers with responsive and reliable in-branch, web and mobile banking

Fransabank is the oldest and among the largest of Lebanon's banks, providing universal banking services through 124 branches. Fransabank has offices in nine other countries and reported net profits of USD179.8 million in financial year 2015 with total assets of USD20 billion.

"We are moving all applications to the DS8870 to take advantage of its exceptional performance, scalability and reliability."

—Roland Tabib, Chief Information Officer and Head of the ICT & Projects Division, Fransabank Group

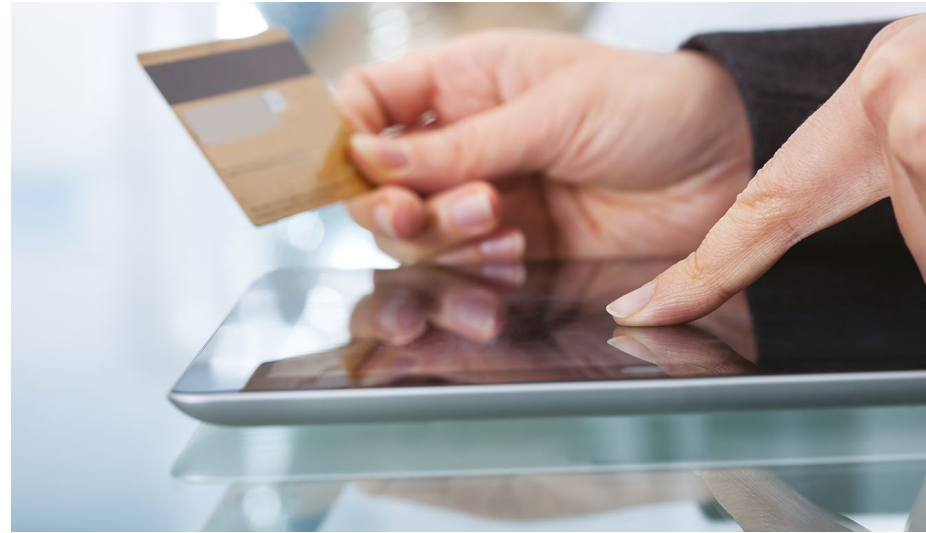
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Growing pains

Fransabank has achieved exceptional growth in recent years. FY 2014 saw the successful acquisition of another major bank, contributing to year-on-year growth of 11.66 percent in total assets and 12.75 percent in shareholders' equity. And from a peak year-on-year growth rate of 40.88 percent in 2011, net loans to customers have since settled to around 10 percent in year-on-year growth—still a highly impressive figure.

In a world in which customers can freely choose between competing financial institutions, growth is only sustainable and profitable if the bank in question can maintain its performance and service levels. If a surge in the volumes of financial transactions causes delays or poor service, both new and existing customers may eventually vote with their feet and take their business elsewhere.



At Fransabank, a key concern was the performance of critical batch processing tasks at the start and end of each working day, and at the end of each month. These processing tasks, which ensure that all transactions are applied accurately and all accounts reconciled, are effectively a statutory requirement as well as enabling the bank to have an accurate view of its business performance.

Roland Tabib, Chief Information Officer and Head of the ICT & Projects division at Fransabank, comments: “As the business grew rapidly and continuously, a main pillar of our IT strategy was to implement a robust, scalable and highly performing infrastructure capable of accompanying the business growth by processing a larger volume of data and transactions in less time. This would avoid any potential future service impact and secure the end-of-day processing before the branches opened at 8 am—without any concerns about the significant volume growth.”

“The combination of FlashSystem and IBM i on IBM POWER8 processors is working very well for us, and contributing to the 40 percent performance gains we have seen across the board.”

—Roland Tabib, Chief Information Officer and Head of the ICT & Projects Division, Fransabank Group

In addition to addressing the risk of batch processes overrunning, Fransabank recognized it would need to serve an increasing number of customers outside of normal branch hours on its ATM, call center, web, and mobile channels. This reinforced the need for higher-performance core banking systems, and put further emphasis on ensuring 24/7 uptime for key systems.

Powerful new servers

Fransabank decided to deploy a completely new SAB AT core banking solution, with the back-office components running on the IBM i operating system and the front-office components running on IBM WebSphere® Application Server on the IBM AIX® operating system. Both components run side-by-side on IBM PowerVM® on the same IBM Power 870 server in the production environment, and the landscape is duplicated in a second data center for protection against disaster.

“Our server landscape is highly virtualized both on the Intel side and on the Power (AIX and i) side,” comments Tabib. “The ability to run two completely different operating systems on the same Power server means that we can choose the best environment to achieve maximum performance for the optimal cost.”



Virtualized storage

When it comes to ensuring exceptional end-to-end performance and high availability for critical systems, the storage layer is a vital consideration. Fransabank reviewed options from leading global vendors before selecting IBM DS8870 enterprise disk systems at the heart of a new virtualized storage landscape. Complementing the DS8870 systems in its primary and

DR sites, Fransabank deployed IBM FlashSystem solutions to provide a “tier zero” of ultra-fast storage and IBM Storwize® V7000 systems to provide flexible internally tiered storage for files and archived data. The entire landscape is virtualized using IBM Spectrum Virtualize (formerly SAN Volume Controller), which enables Fransabank to manage sophisticated policy-based migration of data up and down the tiers as performance requirements change.

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—Roland Tabib, Chief Information Officer and Head of the ICT & Projects Division, Fransabank Group

“IBM ran a workshop to demonstrate FlashSystem working with the i operating system on Power, and we were confident that it would deliver significant performance improvements for core banking environment,” recalls Tabib. “The combination of FlashSystem and IBM i on IBM POWER8® processors is working very well for us, and contributing to the 40 percent performance gains we have seen across the board.”

He adds: “Beyond the new core banking environment, we are steadily moving all applications to the DS8870, on both production and disaster recovery datacenters, to take advantage of its exceptional performance, scalability and reliability.

Among other things, the DS8870 stores all of the virtual machine images for our Microsoft Hyper-V and VMware landscapes; around 200 VMs in total.”

Sustainable growth

With its new core banking software running on IBM Power Systems™ servers and backed by IBM storage, Fransabank is confident that performance will keep pace with growing demands.

“The new system is much larger and more comprehensive in functional terms than our previous core banking solution, but even so, the IBM infrastructure is delivering fantastic performance,” says Tabib. “In all the tests we have run so far, we have seen 40 percent performance gains for key processes. For example, the end-of-day process has fallen from eight hours to less than five, and the

end-of-month process from 13 hours to less than eight. In the first case, that means we are no longer concerned about the risk of overrunning and impacting in-branch services. And in the second case, it means that we get faster insight into the health of the business.”

Supporting new channels

With a fully virtualized storage landscape managed by IBM Spectrum Virtualize, with the highly scalable DS8870 at its heart, Fransabank can continue to grow its business without any concerns about rising data volumes. The bank stores on its FlashSystem devices those application components and data that require exceptionally high performance, and all other enterprise data and server images on the DS8870 systems.

“We have used IBM storage—including the predecessor to the DS8870—for a number of years, and have always been highly satisfied with the reliability and availability,” comments Tabib. “The DS8870 in particular is very robust, and that is vital when you are dealing with other people’s money. We simply cannot afford to have outages or lose data. Of course, it’s no longer only a question of keeping systems available during standard working hours. We have an increasing number of telephone, web and mobile banking users to support; here, the phenomenal uptime of the DS8870 is a real asset in delivering excellent customer service.”

Solution components

- IBM® AIX®
- IBM DS8870
- IBM FlashSystem®
- IBM i
- IBM Power® 870 with IBM POWER8® processors
- IBM Spectrum Virtualize™
- IBM Storwize® V7000
- IBM WebSphere® Application Server

Connect with us



Take the next step

To learn more about IBM storage, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website:
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