



Business challenge

To uphold the superb quality of its customer service and operational efficiency under growing demand, Coventry Building Society initiated a far-reaching technology refresh.

Transformation

Coventry Building Society deployed a software-defined storage solution featuring IBM® Spectrum® Storage and IBM FlashSystem® arrays, giving the company's IT team unprecedented control of resources.

Business benefits:

100-fold

consistent performance increase helps Coventry Building Society respond faster to members

80%

decrease in data center floorspace requirements contribute to low running costs

Frees

employees to focus on innovation by simplifying storage management and support

Coventry Building Society

Supporting impeccable customer service with powerful software-defined storage from IBM

Coventry Building Society serves its 1.9 million members in the UK with savings accounts or mortgages. It aims to offer simple, good-value savings products and low-risk residential mortgages alongside great service.

"IBM Capacity on Demand is a game-changer, because it allows us to accommodate organic growth without over-spending. No company wants to risk stalling expansion or breaking the bank—with IBM, we can avoid both."

David Bywater

Senior Technical Specialist

Coventry Building Society

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Overcoming growing pains

While the last decade has posed challenges for financial organizations across the world, the UK's second largest building society Coventry Building Society has seen its business go from strength to strength.

To accommodate its flourishing customer base and foster innovation on the digital channel, the member-owned company recognized that it needed to enhance its IT infrastructure. Specifically, the company began looking for an alternative to the storage platform supporting its critical systems, including its core banking, human resources and in-branch applications.

David Bywater, Senior Technical Specialist at Coventry Building Society, explains: "It was taking longer and longer to run the batch processes we use to close each day's business, until there was a danger of them encroaching on the next morning and preventing our branches from functioning as normal. Everything from the opening and closing balances on customers' accounts to maturity and interest payments all depended on accurately reconciling the figures daily. The risk was even higher for our month-end batch processing, where we put a specialist team on standby in case things didn't wrap up in time overnight. We identified storage as a bottleneck."



Before making the move to a new storage platform, Coventry Building Society IT team wanted to be sure that it could achieve a smooth transition. The company was also looking for ways to simplify management and support for its storage systems, aiming to free up IT staff to focus on higher-value tasks.

Making the right decisions

A proposal from one vendor stood out to Coventry Building Society during the consideration process: IBM. Bywater adds, "Many vendors were trying to sell us more of the same as our old spinning disk storage systems. IBM came along, and at a similar

price to the competing offerings, proposed an all-flash solution. Through IBM FlashSystem, we could gain huge performance increases and the ability to increase capacity on demand, making it an option we couldn't pass up."

Coventry Building Society made IBM FlashSystem technology its storage platform of choice. To simplify management of its storage infrastructure, Coventry Building Society opted for a software-defined approach enabled by IBM Spectrum Storage technology. By taking advantage of the IBM Spectrum Storage Suite offering, the building society gained access to a full suite of management tools at significantly lower cost than licensing the solutions separately.

Using IBM Spectrum Virtualize software built into the IBM FlashSystem family, Coventry Building Society migrated data from its legacy infrastructure to the IBM Storage systems seamlessly.

"Every action we take is aimed at making it as easy as possible to transact with our members. IBM solutions provide the performance and flexibility we need to service our diverse customer base through multiple channels."

Rosario Marcel, Shared Infrastructure Manager, Coventry Building Society

David Bywater, says, “The migration capability of IBM Spectrum Virtualize is fantastic. It allowed us to move to the new IBM Storage platform with no impact on end users and no time-consuming manual copying of data.”

Next, the company opted to move its on-premises IT infrastructure to a colocation data center, freeing up personnel for innovation and driving down costs further. At the same time, it purchased IBM FlashSystem 9100 built with IBM Spectrum Virtualize, which provides even greater performance than its initial IBM FlashSystem deployment. With IBM FlashSystem and IBM Spectrum Virtualize technology, the company gained powerful data reduction and virtualization capabilities at a moment when cost-efficiency was crucial.

Increasing insight

To ramp up visibility of its storage resources, Coventry Building Society selected IBM Storage Insights. The cloud-based service helped the company achieve greater control over storage performance, which came in especially useful post-move to the colocation data center. Bywater explains, “With IBM Storage Insights, we have root-cause analysis of storage issues at our fingertips. It also helps with planning, giving us instant insight into how much capacity we have. We’ve started looking at the recommendations that IBM sends us for optimization and best practices for



our storage environment, based on data collected through Storage Insights.”

To support its data-intensive analytics platform, Coventry Building Society deployed IBM Spectrum Scale. Bywater says, “Our analytics software crunches through a lot of numbers to extract insights into our performance. IBM Spectrum Scale supports the high-performance parallel file system required to get results to the business fast.”

Building on firm foundations

Today, the building society has the powerful, scalable and cost-effective infrastructure it needs to continue delighting members during every interaction. Rosario Marcel, Shared Infrastructure Manager at Coventry Building Society, comments, “Every action we take is aimed at making it as easy as possible to transact with our members.

IBM solutions provide the performance and flexibility that enable us to service our diverse customer base through multiple channels.”

As soon as the IBM FlashSystem arrays were deployed, Coventry Building Society saw an impact on application performance. The IBM technology accelerated day-end and month-end batch processing dramatically, ensuring that both are easily completed overnight without disruption to the next day’s operations.

Marcel recalls, “Since the first successful run on IBM FlashSystem to now, the platform has performed superbly. We saw something like a 100-fold performance increase, with our month-end batch processing cut by 71 percent, from seven hours to two hours, and day-end batch processing by 85 percent, from seven hours to one hour. We immediately sent the specialist team we usually have on standby away, and haven’t had to call them back since, which represents a big saving.”

With its new, easy-to-manage storage infrastructure, Coventry Building Society can shift its focus from maintenance to optimizing service quality and building innovative customer experiences to reinforce its leading market position. The solutions also help the company maintain exceptional levels of operating efficiency.

Marcel continues, “Before, we spent a lot of time every day resolving issues. The IBM Storage solution practically runs

itself, so we can spend even more time ensuring that our members get the best possible service. We estimate that the IBM solutions contribute to an 80 percent decrease in data center floorspace requirements, supporting our goal of ultra-high efficiency.”

Foreseeing a bright future

Looking ahead, Coventry Building Society anticipates further growth. Using IBM Capacity on Demand, the company can scale up resources immediately when it needs them.

Bywater says, “The last time we scaled up our legacy storage systems it took four months to purchase and install additional capacity. IBM Capacity on Demand is a game-changer, because it allows us to accommodate organic growth of the business without over-spending. No company wants to risk stalling

expansion or breaking the bank—with IBM, we can avoid both.”

Marcel concludes, “Our expansion hasn’t faltered, and we don’t expect it to anytime soon. That means more members, more savings accounts, more mortgages. Our IBM infrastructure will help us rise to the challenge to keep delivering the best service online and at branches at the highest efficiency.”

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Rosario Marcel, Shared Infrastructure Manager, Coventry Building Society

Solution components

- IBM® FlashSystem® 9100
- IBM Spectrum® Scale
- IBM Spectrum Storage Suite
- IBM Spectrum Virtualize
- IBM Storage Insights

Take the next step

To learn more about IBM Storage and IBM Spectrum Storage solutions, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit ibm.com/storage or ibm.com/storage/spectrum

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