
Overview

The need

Manufacturer Sto realized that its order-processing capabilities would soon be outpaced by fast-growing business volumes, a scenario that could lead to lost orders or late deliveries.

The solution

Sto upgraded its data storage and server systems to the latest IBM technologies, accelerating key production and back-office processes by up to 99 percent.

The benefit

Cuts latency for sales order processing systems by 50 percent, improving productivity; shrinks data backup from hours to 30 seconds, keeping systems available to serve global customer base.

Sto AG

High-speed storage technology raises sales order capacity by 50 percent to match explosive growth

Sto specializes in providing insulation, paint, plasterwork and concrete restoration services to construction companies. Headquartered in Stühlingen, Germany, the firm employs more than 4,600 people across its operations in Europe, the Americas and Asia, and achieved revenues of more than €1 billion in 2012.

Growing pains

How would it be if you could prepare for explosive growth without over-investing in capacity right now?

Manufacturing company Sto has been growing at between five and seven percent per year for more than a decade. The company's rapid growth has caused customer orders to top five million a year, dramatically increasing the burden of sales administration. As the company pursues bold targets for growth, it realized that its order processing systems would soon be outpaced by rapidly increasing sales. This scenario could result in lost orders or late deliveries, which could damage customer satisfaction levels and tarnish the company's reputation for excellent customer service.

Speed is a key ingredient in ensuring excellent customer service—delays and inefficiency can cause customers to place their business elsewhere. Sto relies on IBM storage to keep its service snappy. “We have reduced the response time for our sales reps and also for our in-branch colleagues by about 50 percent, which translates directly into greater customer satisfaction.”

—Philipp Bellhäuser, Head of IT Infrastructure, Architecture and Operations, Sto



Solution components

- IBM® System Storage® DS8870
 - IBM Storwize® V7000
 - IBM System Storage TS3500 tape libraries
 - IBM Power® 750
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Sto urgently needed to rethink its back-office operations, and find a way to process the increased business volumes cost-effectively.

Boosting performance

Sto solved the challenge by implementing new IBM storage and server technologies that can handle vastly increased sales volumes, based on a solution that can grow almost without limit. In doing so, Sto has removed the barriers to growth, and prepared the company for the future with flexible, powerful, scalable business infrastructure.

Sto chose to replace its existing servers with four IBM® Power® 750 systems running the IBM AIX® operating system, and to migrate its suite of SAP applications to this new platform. The servers are connected to two high-performance IBM System Storage® DS8870 disk systems, each of which contains approximately 2.1 TB of capacity including ultra-fast solid-state-drives (SSDs), and two IBM Storwize® V7000 systems. The entire storage landscape is virtualized using IBM System Storage SAN Volume Controller, in a stretched-cluster architecture for extreme resilience.

Philipp Bellhäuser, Head of IT Infrastructure, Architecture and Operations, comments, “On the storage side, we can configure the DS8870 to ensure that data requiring very high I/O performance is automatically moved to SSDs, which are much faster than spinning disk drives. For our OLTP and SAP applications—the primary business systems—we use IBM DS8870 for the highest performance and lowest response times.”

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Accelerated service

Bellhäuser comments, “For back-end data management processes, the IBM solution is delivering huge savings in time and effort. The new Storwize V7000 systems have given us a cost-effective platform for managing growth in mass capacity, making it very easy to add new drives as required. And most important of all, the high performance of the DS8870 has reduced the system response time by about 50 percent for most processes used by our sales reps and our in-branch colleagues.” This reduces the time that key sales systems are unavailable for use, avoiding downtime during working hours for this global business.

Sto uses IBM Tivoli® Storage Manager with IBM FlashCopy® software to accelerate data backup to two IBM System Storage TS3500 tape libraries, slashing the time required from hours to just 30 seconds in some cases—a more than 99 percent reduction.

In what may be a complex, multi-stage sales process, halving the lowest latency at every stage reduces the overall time to serve each customer by up to 25 percent.

The new IBM servers, software and storage devices provide the extra capacity that Sto urgently needed to cope with the increasing burden of sales administration and meet its ambitious targets for international expansion, removing barriers to growth.

For more information

To learn more about IBM storage solutions, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit the following website: ibm.com/systems/storage



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IBM Corporation
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Produced in the United States of America
March 2014

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