



Business challenge

After several consecutive years of substantial growth and poised to launch an aggressive expansion plan, Global Payment Services (GPS) needed to meet this growth challenge by upgrading its data center environment.

Transformation

Together with IBM Business Partner Gulf Business Machines (GBM), GPS implemented a flexible IT infrastructure able to keep pace with rapid growth by refreshing its data center with IBM® Power® Systems hardware. The new solution also used advanced virtualization capabilities to encourage a security-rich environment.

Results

~50% drop in processing times
for financial transactions

Supports future growth
with a flexible, highly-available
IT architecture

Cuts database licensing costs
with more efficient hardware utilization

Global Payment Services (GPS)

Driving growth and innovation with a powerful architecture

Founded in 2004, GPS has grown to become one of the largest third-party payment processing organizations in the Middle East. The business, headquartered in Manama, Bahrain, provides regional banks and financial institutions with a host of services including credit, debit and prepaid card processing, POS and ATM management, merchant acquisition, fraud management and EMV card personalization.

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—Ali Arab, General Manager and Cofounder, Global Payment Services (GPS)



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Greater volume, greater challenge

GPS, one of the largest third-party payment processors in the Middle East, was struggling with complications from its success. Over the past few years, the organization experienced explosive growth among its financial transactions, and its current hardware struggled to keep pace.

“In 2016,” recalls Ali Arab, General Manager and Cofounder at GPS, “we handled 40 million payment transactions. In 2017, we executed 80 million. That’s a lot of growth to keep up with. And we expect those numbers to double this year as well.”

At the same time, the business was adjusting to various industry disruptors—such as fintechs and cryptocurrencies—many of which placed increased pressures on IT assets and the firm’s ability to adapt to those challenges. In response, GPS wanted to refresh its corporate data center with more powerful hardware. However, these servers would need to be able to accommodate more than just current growth levels.

“We’ve traditionally been focused on serving customers in Bahrain and the surrounding region,” explains Arab. “But our new vision is to expand out into more countries and create new services to touch more customers.”

Powering through

With these aggressive growth plans in mind, GPS reached out to GBM, its long-time technical advisor. The GBM team, after a series of discussions with the payment processor, developed a new architecture plan built around IBM Power Systems hardware.

“We’ve worked with GBM since our business began back in 2005,” recounts Arab. “They are always there when we need them. So when it came time to update our servers, they were our first choice. And they, in turn, suggested that we continue with IBM Power.”

In fact, GBM recommended a pair of IBM Power System S924 servers, featuring IBM POWER9™ processor-based technology. And the GBM team deployed this new hardware at the client’s new corporate headquarters in Manama, Bahrain.

Beyond the increased capacity, the Power System servers offer other useful advantages. “From a security perspective,” explains Arab, “we need to segregate processing and data for each institution that we support. IBM has really helped us accomplish this by providing virtualization tools that let us control where data goes.” On each of the servers, GPS uses IBM PowerVM® technology to create unique,

encapsulated IBM AIX® V7.2 operating system instances for each supported business. By isolating these processes, GPS can more easily comply with the various industry and compliance standards that regulate the financial industry.

Problem solved

With the new hardware in place, GPS could more easily pursue its aggressive growth goals. “As we added more customers,” explains Arab, “we needed the performance to be there—after all, technology is the backbone of our services to our customers. We wanted a platform that could grow, and POWER9 delivered.”

The Power Systems servers also helps reduce database licensing costs. GPS can assign higher workloads to each processing core, requiring fewer database licenses to maintain normal operations. At the same time the POWER9 technology can work through more customer transactions per second, cutting its payment card processing timelines in half, on average.

Beyond the increased performance, the IBM hardware delivers an architecture designed for high availability. “Before we switched to IBM originally,” recalls Arab, “we would have around half an hour of downtime each month. But since

we’ve switched, we haven’t had any availability issues.” This reliability, in turn, helps build greater confidence within GPS’s customer base.

“The industry is changing,” concludes Arab. “New payment methods, new banking methods, fintech, cryptocurrency, cross-border payment regulations—there are so many compliance and technical challenges that we need to navigate. And we need to meet these challenges while delivering a cost-effective service to our clients. By working with GBM and IBM, we can not only address these challenges, we can overcome them.”

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Solution components

- [IBM® AIX®](#)
- [IBM Power® System S924](#)
- [IBM PowerVM®](#)

Take the next step

To learn more about the IBM solutions featured in this story, please contact your IBM representative or IBM Business Partner.

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About Gulf Business Machines

IBM Business Partner [GBM](#) provides technology services and support to businesses throughout the Middle East and Northern Africa. The organization was founded in 1990 and is headquartered in Dubai. With a staff of over 1,200 experts, the company specializes in the development of “smart city” solutions as well as the delivery of retail-, finance- and petrochemical-focused IT projects.

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