Business Challenge

NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland set out to offer superior SAP HANA® hosting services. Could the company find the magic mix of enhanced operational excellence combined with greater cost-efficiency?

Transformation

NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland launched SAP® ERP powered by SAP HANA hosting services on IBM Power Systems™ servers and IBM FlashSystem® storage, using advanced virtualization to boost efficiency.

Ireneusz Pelka, SAP Basis Senior Consultant and PowerVM Expert, NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland

Business benefits:

**Accelerates**

provisioning of new client systems from two days to a few hours

**Reduces**

operational costs, helping NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland to undercut rivals’ fees

**Slashes**

latency by a factor of five to deliver stellar service to clients

NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland

Seizes competitive advantage with top-quality, cost-effective SAP hosting services

NTT DATA Business Solutions (external link), formerly itelligence, is a leading international full-service provider focusing on SAP deployments, offering consulting, licensing, application management services, hosting services, and proprietary industry solutions. NTT DATA Business Solutions employs around 7,000 people in 25 countries.

NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland, formerly itelligence Poland, employs more than 200 people across five locations. The company has been awarded with a Customer Friendly Company certificate and a Quality International Award. In 2017, the company generated total sales of PLN 82.7 million (EUR 19.6 million).

“IIBM Power Systems and IBM FlashSystem enable us to offer outstanding SAP solutions and our world-class SLAs at very commercially attractive fees.”

Ireneusz Pelka, SAP Basis Senior Consultant and PowerVM Expert, NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland

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Need for speed

In the past few years, SAP has been turning heads in the IT industry, with a wealth of new solutions hitting the market. The major wave of change came with the announcement of SAP HANA, a powerful in-memory database promising to unlock real-time analytics on an unprecedented scale.

As interest in the possibilities of SAP HANA grew, SAP specialist NTT DATA Business Solutions quickly rose to the challenge. Alongside its partner divisions in other nations, NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland launched SAP Business Warehouse powered by SAP HANA hosting services, supported by an x86 architecture. As customers adopted the new offering, NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland found that the underlying hardware lacked flexibility and was difficult to manage. Furthermore, it was hard to maintain efficient operations, as the company had to run dedicated servers for each customer—causing costs to rise in line with revenues.

When SAP ERP powered by SAP HANA appeared on the horizon, with considerably greater technical demands, NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland set out to find ways to improve its service delivery and to cut its operational costs.

Tried and tested platform

For many years, NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland had run customers’ traditional SAP ERP applications on IBM Power Systems with great success. Based on its previous experience, the company decided to trial SAP ERP powered by SAP HANA on IBM Power Systems, and found that the IBM platform was an excellent fit with its requirements.

Ireneusz Pelka, SAP Basis Senior Consultant and PowerVM Expert at NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland, recalls, “We had been using IBM Power Systems for around eight years previously, and we were very happy with the platform. In the past, we had reserved IBM Power Systems primarily for our most demanding customers, and we knew from experience that the servers would continue to perform well even under constant, very high utilization. For us, IBM Power Systems stands for reliability and stability, and that was precisely what we wanted to deliver for our SAP ERP powered by SAP HANA hosting services.”

NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland deployed IBM Power Systems in a Tailored Datacenter Integration (TDI) approach—utilizing existing infrastructure to run SAP HANA rather than purchasing new dedicated hardware. The company engaged IBM Systems Lab Services for the initial deployment, and purchased the servers, paid in flat monthly installments through a five-year contract arranged by IBM Global Financing. Since then, NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland has onboarded many additional customers for the new service and has expanded its IBM Power Systems footprint, completing these subsequent implementations independently.

Today, NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland runs the majority of customers’ SAP HANA instances on IBM Power Systems, including business-critical systems. SAP ERP powered by SAP HANA runs on IBM Power Systems E950 servers, each running on the latest generation IBM Power9™ processors. These servers are virtualized using IBM PowerVM® and run the SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications (external link) operating system. In total, NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland runs more than 220 virtual machines—known as logical partitions (LPARs)—on its IBM Power Systems servers, and has one of the country’s largest installation bases for SAP ERP powered by SAP HANA.

More recently, SAP launched SAP S/4HANA—an entirely new generation of ERP. NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland currently serves several customers with SAP S/4/HANA hosting services running on IBM Power Systems and IBM FlashSystem.

Additionally, NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland continues to run traditional SAP ERP applications supported by other databases, using the IBM AIX® operating system running on IBM Power Systems E950 servers.

Ireneusz Pelka adds, “We use IBM Power Systems to run a private cloud through which our customers can access their SAP applications. Our offering is SAP-as-a-Service, we can give you everything you need to run SAP, from the infrastructure and hypervisor right through to the operating system and applications, all in one neat package.”

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Ireneusz Pelka
SAP Basis Senior Consultant and PowerVM Expert
NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland

Harnessing advanced virtualization

The IBM PowerVM virtualization software enables NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland to share its physical IBM Power Systems servers between multiple clients in a highly secure manner. As a result, NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland can support many customer systems using a smaller physical footprint, reduce the need to purchase new servers, and achieve excellent server and storage utilization.

The IBM Power Systems platform features Live Partition Mobility, which enables NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland to move live customer systems seamlessly from one physical machine to another without disrupting users—offering excellent flexibility. This function enables
Benefits in detail

- Accelerates provisioning of new systems from two days to a few hours, driving highly responsive service
- Reduces operational costs by allowing NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland to maintain a smaller physical footprint, helping the company undercut rivals’ fees
- Moving to IBM FlashSystem storage slashes latency by a factor of five, enabling faster application response times for clients
- Provides plenty of headroom for future growth
- Cuts time spent on infrastructure management, reducing the need to hire additional staff as NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland wins more business

Key components

Applications: SAP® ERP powered by SAP HANA®, SAP S/4HANA®
Software: IBM® AIX®, IBM Geographically Dispersed Resiliency for Power Systems, IBM PowerVC Virtualization Center, IBM PowerVM®, IBM Spectrum Virtualize™, SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications (external link)
Hardware: IBM FlashSystem®, IBM Power Systems™ E950, POWER9™
Services: IBM Global Financing, IBM Systems Lab Services

“Cutting-edge storage

After initially trialing storage from another vendor to support customers’ SAP ERP powered by SAP HANA solutions, Cloud-Init soon switched to using its existing IBM Storage devices. As these machines approach end of life, NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland is upgrading to state-of-the-art IBM FlashSystem solutions virtualized using IBM Spectrum® Virtualize. Currently, the company stores over 200 TB of data on IBM FlashSystem.

“We have seen massive advantages from moving to IBM FlashSystem,” remarks Ireneusz Pelka. “Because flash is extremely fast, we have been able to cut latency from 3-5 milliseconds to less than 1 millisecond, helping to keep response times low for customers. What’s more, the new storage arrays can handle much greater IOPS than their predecessors. Ultimately, these advantages mean that when customer contracts come to an end, at the renewal we can offer them more performance for the same or perhaps even a lower fee.”

He continues, “Besides speed, the other big win from FlashSystem is the advanced virtualization. We use IBM Spectrum Virtualize to support everything from compression and volume copies to moving storage volumes between different physical devices. The virtualization solution makes routine system management so much easier. Building on our work with IBM Spectrum Virtualize, we are currently looking to switch from SAP HANA System Replication to the IBM Geographically Dispersed Resiliency for Power Systems solution.”

NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland to avoid system outages for customers during hardware maintenance, for example. Furthermore, the feature helps NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland to distribute workloads evenly between physical servers to optimize performance and utilization.

Ireneusz Pelka comments, “We have been using Live Partition Mobility on IBM Power Systems for many years, and it never ceases to impress us as the systems we move today are so much larger than those of a few years ago. For example, we recently migrated a live 1.5 TB customer system from one server to another, and it worked perfectly as usual.”

NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland has largely automated the management of virtual machines on its IBM Power Systems servers using IBM PowerVC Virtualization Center software, helping the IT team to save time on routine system management tasks. IBM PowerVC Virtualization Center, Cloud-Init and Ansible allow NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland to provision new virtual machines in a highly automated fashion, cutting deployment times.

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Ireneusz Pelka
SAP Basis Senior Consultant and PowerVM Expert
NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland
Taking the lead

The IBM servers and storage help
NTT DATA Business Solutions Poland to
offer more responsive customer service
at lower cost, transforming its offering.
For example, automation from the
IBM PowerVC Virtualization Center has cut
the time to provision new client systems
from two days to just a few hours.

Because the provisioning process is highly
automated, NTT DATA Business Solutions
Poland’s IT team saves time and can devote
more energy to other activities. By shrinking
the management overhead, the company
reduces the need to hire additional IT
personnel as it acquires new customers.

Ireneusz Pelka elaborates,
“IBM Power Systems and
IBM FlashSystem enable us to offer
outstanding SAP solutions and our
world-class SLAs at very commercially
attractive fees. We are confident that the
IBM solutions will continue to meet our
customers’ demands for years to come.”

He continues, “For example, many
customers are only using around
20 percent of their available CPU power.
That tells us that the IBM Power Systems
servers can do much more than we
currently demand from them, so I have
excellent peace of mind.”

Ireneusz Pelka concludes, “Running SAP
ERP powered by SAP HANA on IBM Power
Systems and IBM FlashSystem helps
NTT DATA Business Solutions to reduce
operational costs and simultaneously
provide faster, more agile services
to clients—a win-win for all.”

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