

case study



Building Contractor Fitzpatrick Constructs Robust Storage Architecture with Eurodata SAN Solution

With the green agenda becoming increasingly important within the building services sector, multi-disciplinary building contractors and civil engineers Fitzpatrick implemented a programme of investment that would take them towards a more environmentally sympathetic business operation. The company, which moved into new HQ premises in Hertfordshire, built their new state-of-the-art offices to achieve an ‘Excellent’ rating for environmental sustainability. As part of this programme of investment, Fitzpatrick sought a consolidation solution for their IT storage and back-up requirements.

Background

Melanie Nurse, CTO at Fitzpatrick explained, “Previously, the company’s data storage and back-up technologies had comprised a series of physically disparate systems. These included hard drives and a low level storage system from EMC. The types of data stored ranged from e-mail, to project information and back-office systems information such as financial and health and safety data. In addition, the multifarious storage systems were not connected by a cohesive back-up strategy.”

This resulted in significant difficulties for the company in managing stored data. This negatively impacted on data retrieval and slowed business processes where teams were using historical information.

As part of their programme of corporate investment, a new construction-specific ERP business system was purchased. It was designed to improve business efficiencies within the organisation helping to track projects, store plans, business correspondence, health and safety information, invoicing and associated administrative documentation.

“This implementation became a key driver in the need to purchase state-of-the art storage technology. It was imperative that a centralised storage system be deployed. We needed to maintain the integrity of information generated by the new business application; assure simple access to historical information; and improve our data back-up regime,” said Nurse.

“Previously we had Business Continuity procedures, in the form of back-up file store. We now wanted Auto Switchover to minimise downtime. Given our increased reliance on IT in our daily operations, ensuring the continuity of our business became another critical driver in selecting new storage technology.

We needed a solution that was cost-effective, simple to implement, failsafe and easy to manage,” explained Nurse.

The Solution

Fitzpatrick began researching storage solutions immediately after the ERP application had been purchased, short listing NetApp, Hitachi and HP solutions.

However, the company was open to objective advice from an expert IT solutions consultancy and sought advice from Eurodata. Commented Nurse, “With their specialist storage consultancy we knew that Eurodata would give us impartial and accurate advice. They have an excellent reputation for supplying solutions that really achieve the objectives of their clients. When they came in to meet us, we were extremely impressed with their proactive approach along with their experience within the construction industry.”

“Eurodata really took note of all the issues that were important to us in this project such as ease of managing the technology and reducing TCO, rather than simply focusing on the nuts and bolts of the technology.

They came to our offices with the physical equipment and its software ready to run a demonstration. This was extremely beneficial to us since we would be managing the system ourselves,” commented Nurse.



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To support both the new ERP application and all historical data Fitzpatrick required 13TB of usable, accessible storage with business continuity capabilities in-built.

The solution now comprises of two Dell EqualLogic SANs, one of which is installed at Fitzpatrick's disaster recovery site ensuring that all historical information would be maintained should a disaster occur.

"We chose Eurodata and Dell EqualLogic because we benefited from consolidated networked storage in a self-managing ISCI storage area network that is very cost-effective, scalable and requires minimal post-implementation training to use", notes Nurse.

"With Eurodata's expertise in the construction industry, we felt secure that their recommendation was the best for our company. This technology will deliver the business continuity capabilities that are essential to us and we will also benefit from a high degree of future-proofing. This solution supports all major operating systems and applications which in turn gives us a robust and reliable storage solution."

The Benefits

The centralised storage architecture brings benefits in the form of:

- Cost savings – by implementing a SAN solution, TCO savings will be delivered by a reduction in the size of the storage inventory and the associated costs of its hardware maintenance and data management.
- Resourcing - the in-house IT team is less invested in the management of data and more involved in other more strategic IT projects. This is facilitated because the EqualLogic SAN comes with self-management software in a scalable, robust unit. This SAN solution also comprises the facility to automate data back-ups. With pre-established back-up schedules, the time taken to complete weekly back-ups by members of the IT team is drastically reduced.
- Data integrity - the speed and ease of access to historical data means the integrity of the data can be checked regularly – delivering future-proofing for forthcoming compliancy issues.
- Speed of business - improving access to data will speed up business processes for those teams which require frequent access to centrally stored information.

- Business Continuity - previously Fitzpatrick had no substantial business continuity strategy or facilities. Now with dual and identical storage systems, should critical operational parameters be reached, a fully redundant alternative is available securely off-site. Corporate data and the company's reputation are protected.

"What we really liked about Eurodata was their absolute understanding of our requirements as a mid-sized construction business. They were extremely keen to help us identify the most appropriate solution and not oversell technologies. They always demonstrated integrity, expertise and an intuitive approach to solution delivery. That is why we will work with them on other strategic initiatives in future," concluded Nurse.

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