



IT-GAARDEN GROWS INTO FLOURISHING DATA HOSTING BUSINESS WITH FULLY REDUNDANT, DUAL-SITE COMPELLENT STORAGE CENTER SAN



It seems appropriate that a company called IT-Gaarden should have developed so organically into the business it has become today. The company began life as an internal IT department for a Danish agricultural consulting firm, conducting the usual PC, server and network-oriented tasks that kept the business running.

The catalyst for change came when the firm made the decision to deploy Citrix and the talented IT staff saw the opportunity to transform an internal department into a hosting company in its own right.

Kim Deleuran has been the chief technical officer at IT-Gaarden since 2001. He has watched IT-Gaarden grow from those early sprouts. “We got a lot of insight into how agricultural related programmes or applications functioned from our mother company and were able to transfer that experience when we began hosting other agriculture-consulting firms,” explained Deleuran. “Today, we have a broader client base in industries beyond agriculture, including insurance companies and even some government related firms.”

PLANTING THE SEEDS FOR GROWTH

As hosting third-party data became the primary business at IT-Gaarden, storage scalability and availability became increasingly important. Previously, the company relied on a mid-range disk array with dual redundant controllers. As the company’s customer base began to grow, remote replication for disaster recovery became a frequently requested service. To offer this service, Deleuran knew he would need to either buy another array to mirror the existing setup, or to go out to the market and look for something altogether new with greater functionality. IT-Gaarden decided to build a new infrastructure based on the Compellent storage area network (SAN) to provide a highly scalable, cost-effective storage infrastructure that could dynamically adapt to changing client needs.

“Our old storage setup was okay but, there wasn’t much to it. We needed more intelligence to offer more service to our clients,” said Deleuran. Top of Deleuran’s priorities for a new SAN were site-to-site redundancy, scalability, ease of management, intelligent reporting and quality customer support. Deleuran took note when a trusted colleague with a strong background in storage told him about Compellent, a vendor with a SAN solution that ticked all of the required boxes and more. “We were so intrigued with Compellent we travelled 150 kilometers to visit the nearest Compellent customer site in Flensburg, Germany said Deleuran. “We were amazed at the customer’s delight in Compellent’s ability to deliver.”

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KIM DELEURAN
CTO
IT-Gaarden

RESULTS REPORTED BY IT-GAARDEN

- » Thin Provisioning increased disk utilization by 35% almost immediately
- » Reduced recovery point objective (RPO) from more than a day to less than an hour
- » Simplified and automated data management and migration
- » Gained efficiencies and made cost savings through more intelligent allocation

OPERATING SYSTEMS

- » Microsoft Windows 2003 and 2008
- » Ubuntu Linux

KEY APPLICATIONS

- » Citrix XenServer 5.5
- » Citrix XenApp
- » VMware ESX 3.5
- » Microsoft Navision
- » Microsoft SQL
- » Microsoft SharePoint
- » Custom agricultural specific apps

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IT-Gaarden now has two Compellent Storage Center SANs split across two geographically separated sites and connected to nearly 75 VMware ESX/Citrix XenServer virtual machines.

The primary system has dual redundant controllers with iSCSI connections to the company’s server blade centre. The primary SAN leverages a mix of Fibre Channel and SATA drives. The system in the second site is similarly configured.

SCALING SMARTLY

Deleuran believes Compellent to be a massive step towards achieving his goals of greater redundancy, scalability and efficiency, particularly the way Compellent Data Progression and Fast Track allow IT-Gaarden to balance cost and performance.

Data Progression intelligently classifies and automatically migrates data at block-level to the optimal tier of storage. It cuts storage costs and manual administration time, while optimising performance and utilisation. Fast Track enhances this process still further by dynamically placing the most frequently used data on the fastest, outer tracks of each drive, resulting in a need for fewer drives to manage data volumes.

The feature proved to be a perfect fit for the majority of data at IT-Gaarden, which Deleuran describes as file data that customers may not access for several months. Today, nearly 75 percent of the company’s data resides on SATA drives. He’s also employed Fast Track to boost the performance of MS Exchange, SQL and financial databases.

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To help meet the immediate needs of the hard-to-predict storage demands of customers, IT-Gaarden relies on Compellent Thin Provisioning, which eliminates the allocated, but unused capacity of traditional storage allocations. This means IT-Gaarden can allocate any size virtual volume up front for customers, without having to purchase the actual physical capacity until data is written by applications. With Thin Provisioning, IT-Gaarden saw an immediate 35 percent increase in disk utilisation.

PROTECTING THE PRESENT AND THE FUTURE

IT-Gaarden and its customers have also benefited from the increased data reliability. Compellent snapshot technology, called Replays, allow Deleuran and his team to recover local data within minutes. Because Replays only capture block-level changes, Deleuran can afford to take them often without taxing performance or consuming large amounts of capacity. As a result, IT-Gaarden has reduced its recovery point objective from more than a day to less than an hour.

To add another level of protection, Deleuran replicates Replays of production data between the local and remote sites. The efficiency of Compellent Replays made it possible for IT-Gaarden to implement cost-effective IP-based replication over its existing networks, ensuring business continuity at a fraction of the cost of other replication solutions.

To date, Deleuran is certainly very pleased with the tip he received from a colleague about the Compellent SAN. “We’re now looking forward to being early adopters of the next exciting technologies being developed by Compellent,” concluded Deleuran. “For us it’s all about the functionality.”

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