

Turners & Growers Case Study

Executive Summary

Established in 1883 as a family company and now listed on the New Zealand Stock Exchange, Turners & Growers is New Zealand's leading distributor, marketer and exporter of fresh produce. The company employs more than 1,500 full time and seasonal staff across 30 sites and facilitates the sale of more than 200 million kilograms of fresh fruit and vegetables a year.

In mid-2009 the company's information systems department faced three main challenges: the information technology (IT) system was running out of storage; the servers were due to be refreshed and the company was considering virtualisation; and the back-up process needed to be overhauled. Adding urgency was that Turners & Growers wanted to put new systems in place before its IT facilities management company moved to a new data centre in September 2009.

IDATA proposed a solution based on an EMC Celerra NS-480 Unified Storage Array that would integrate with Turners & Growers' IT systems, address the storage and back-up problems, facilitate virtualisation with VMware and enable the company to continue to grow.

IDATA had just six weeks to get the job done. "It came together very well," says Turners & Growers IS operations manager Rodolfo Gandionco.

"Using VMWare we were able to virtualise 90 per cent of our servers. The new virtualised servers and storage system have solved all the major IT issues the company faced. We are now reaping the benefits."

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Client Background



Turners & Growers is New Zealand's leading distributor, marketer and exporter of fresh produce. It employs more than 1,500 full time and seasonal staff people across four divisions – Domestic, International, Investments & Strategic Projects and ENZA Foods.

The company dates back to 1883, when English immigrant Edward Turner set up a fruit and flower shop in Auckland. By 1921 the business had become a substantial produce growing, importing and auctioneering operation and the Turner family created a partnership with their suppliers called Turners & Growers. In 2003 the company merged with apple and pear marketer ENZA and the following year it was listed on the New Zealand Stock Exchange.

Today Turners & Growers:

- Facilitates the sale of more than 200 million kilograms of fresh fruit and vegetables a year through its daily markets in Auckland, Wellington and Christchurch and regionally.
- Is Australasia's largest apple company, marketing and exporting 125 million kg a year
- Is New Zealand's largest tomato producer at 7 million kg
- Imports 35 million kg of Bonita bananas a year
- Is the largest domestic producer of apple, carrot and berry juices at 14 million litres a year
- Operates New Zealand's largest flower auction at 14 million stems a year
- Is New Zealand's largest hirer of produce containers with 1.4 million pallets, crates and bins
- Owns a fleet of specialised fresh produce trucks that travel more than 4 million km a year
- Is one of the largest operators of fruit cool stores throughout New Zealand

Business Challenge

In mid 2009 Turners & Growers' information technology system comprised more than 80 servers from multiple vendors with the main software applications being SAP, Microsoft Office, Exchange and a few SQL and web applications. The servers were hosted by a facilities management company at its Auckland central data centre. Turners & Growers' in-house information technology team of about 25 included five network engineers, SAP developers and helpdesk staff.



Turners & Growers operates a thin client environment with a farm of terminal servers providing a desktop environment for 30 offices throughout New Zealand, from Kerikeri in the north to Invercargill in the south. Due to the seasonal nature of the business activity ranges from just 700 to over 1,500 at peak seasonal periods.

Turners & Growers IS operations manager Rodolfo Gandionco says in mid-2009 the department faced three main challenges:

1. Storage: The company's IT system was running out of disk space, the storage array was getting old and out of warranty and it was slowing down business applications like SAP
2. Server: The company was due for its three yearly server refresh and was looking at virtualisation to consolidate its servers and improve efficiency and ease of management
3. Backups: The backup window was getting smaller and smaller and this was a "pain point" that also needed to be addressed.

An issue that made this project more urgent and complicated is that its IT facilities management company was moving to a new data centre. "We wanted to start afresh at the new data centre with our new servers and storage," says Mr Gandionco. "That meant we squeezed the project into six weeks."

"Our outsourced data centre was moving so we squeezed the project into six weeks."

IDATA Solution



IDATA proposed a solution based on an EMC Celerra NS-480 Unified Storage Array with 33 terabytes of storage that was accepted by Turners & Growers.

IDATA account manager Antony Bridle said "Turners & Growers required a solution that provided a strategic platform from which they could not only address their challenges today, but can also adapt to any future changes in the business. Turners & Growers required more than just bigger and newer storage, they needed an infrastructure that was agile, and that's the solution we delivered."

IDATA provided a solution comprising of:

- EMC Celerra NS-480 Unified Storage Array for Block and File based Storage;
- VMware vSphere 4 for server virtualisation;
- EMC Replication Manager for application consistent array snapshots;
- EMC NetWorker for enterprise wide data protection.

EMC hardware and software together with VMware virtualisation software enabled Turners & Growers to streamline its IT management and increase availability and reliability by using a virtualised information infrastructure.

And the solution can grow as Turners & Growers' business grows. Mr Bridle says "EMC's longstanding partnership with SAP also provided a proven path for SAP applications and SAP IT infrastructures to be more efficient, compliant and effective."

"We decided on EMC and IDATA as our implementation partners for storage and for virtualisation using EMC's VMWare," says Mr Gandionco. "We believe EMC's solution fitted better with our future plans and IDATA has the expertise we needed and close ties with EMC."

Results



Because of the data centre move IDATA had just six weeks to get the whole job done. “It came together very well with just very minor issues,” says Mr Gandionco. “The implementation was very smooth and well planned.”

“We had more than 80 servers and our target was to virtualise half of them. In fact, using VMware we were able to virtualise 90 per cent of our servers so now we have just 10 physical servers. That makes life a lot simpler.”

Mr Gandionco says the new virtualised servers and storage system have solved all three issues the company faced including the storage shortage and slowness, server inefficiency and the back-up difficulties. He said Turners & Growers was “reaping the benefits of the new system now.”

In summary, the benefits include:

- Fewer user calls to Helpdesk
- Faster processing for log-ons, SAP use and peripherals such as barcodes
- Reduced data centre space requirement and resulting cost savings
- Faster implementation of new applications e.g. web servers
- Faster integration of newly acquired companies
- Faster back-ups requiring less management

“Whatever demands the business places on us, our new system enables us to react quicker.”

“It has helped us reduce our user calls and the system is much faster. It used to be two minutes to log in and now it is just 20 seconds. SAP is processing much faster. In fact there was an issue that came up after we upgraded that the SAP database was too quick and we needed to put a delay in place for a particular sequential job.

“There are also other cost savings with virtualisation. We have gone from five racks to three racks at the data centre – that’s less data centre space to lease, less energy consumption and, in the long term, it will mean significant savings in management.

“Previously, to implement a new application would take days and now it takes minutes. For example for a new web server we would have to order the web server and wait for it to come – now because it is virtualised we can use CPU, disk space and memory on our existing servers.

“One of our subsidiaries, the Fruit Case Company needed to put an application on-line and it took only a few minutes. We rang them back 15 minutes later to say it was up and running and they couldn’t believe it.

“We are getting very good feedback from users. On our domestic floor where we have produce and flower sales every morning they scan barcodes which need to be validated by the server. This used to take up to five minutes and now it is down to seconds which obviously improves productivity.

“For back-ups Networker integrates nicely with EMC’s disk array. Back-ups finish much earlier now and don’t need as much management.

“All our issues were solved by the project and we are also much more mobile and flexible. Turners & Growers is comprised of a lot of different companies and the new storage system and virtualised servers will make it a lot easier to expand and integrate our existing system to cater for future growth.”

“We believe this new set up will enable us to grow for at least three to four years. For example, we currently have just eight shelves with 120 drives but we have the capacity to expand to 36 shelves with 480 drives – which is an incredible amount of growth.

“Whatever demands the business places on us, our new system enables us to react quicker.”



“We had a good relationship with our previous storage partner and we were looking for a partner we could go forward with. IDATA have proven they have the expertise and we expect this will be the start of a great relationship.”

“EMC’s solution fitted better with our future plans and IDATA has the expertise we needed.”



IDATA Resolutions Ltd

Level 15, IDATA House, 7 City Road,
Auckland
PO Box 68920, Auckland
New Zealand

Auckland Office

T +64 9 360 4357
F +64 9 360 4367

Wellington Office

T +64 4 931 9400
F +64 4 931 9402

Support 0800 222 587

www.idataresolutions.com

IDATA Resolutions Pty Ltd

PO Box 3004 Erina NSW 2250
Australia

Sydney Office

T +61 1300 493 566
F +61 2 4325 5949

Melbourne Office

T +61 3 9653 9326
F +61 3 9653 9307

Support 1800 095 181

www.idataresolutions.com

