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Tim Lee, Senior Network Analyst

Suzuki Manufacturing Builds a Storage Environment for Agility and Growth with F5 ARX

American Suzuki Motor Corporation prides itself on providing value-packed automobiles, motorcycles, ATVs, scooters and marine engines. Its IT organization shares that commitment to customer satisfaction. When rapid data growth began impacting users by dragging down the performance of its Windows storage, the IT team took action. Relying on the powerful data management capabilities of F5® ARX® file virtualization solutions, American Suzuki Motor Company seamlessly transitioned to a higher-performance network-attached storage (NAS) environment and implemented an automated Information Lifecycle Management (ILM) strategy that slashed backup times and storage costs.

Business Challenge

With file data growing at 50 percent annually, American Suzuki Motor Corporation was finding it difficult to manage data effectively. Its Windows environment supported more than 1,000 users for file sharing, many of whom complained about performance when accessing their shares. Data migrations could take at least a week, eating up IT resources and creating downtime for users. Backups had become problematic as well.

"We have 12 hour backup windows, but backups were taking 18 hours to complete. I was always chasing those hours," recalls

Charles Chen, Lead Analyst at American Suzuki Motor Corporation.

To address these issues and create a more agile infrastructure that would adapt to ongoing storage growth, the IT team consulted with Trace3, its trusted technology partner.

"We know we cannot stop data growth, so we had to come up with a plan to deal with it," Chen says. "We decide to move to NetApp NAS and incorporate ILM technology so we could separate the data that we really cared about from the data that was less critical to us."

Overview

Industry

Automotive

Challenges

- Stop data growth from adversely impacting Windows server performance
- Keep backups from exceeding available window
- Control rising backup costs
- Eliminate downtime resulting from complex data migrations

Solution

- ARX500
- Data Manager
- Automated data migration and storage tiering policies

Benefits

- Cut backup time from 18 hours to 1.5 hours and lowered backup costs
- Seamlessly migrated to NetApp NAS without downtime
- Reclaimed Tier 1 capacity with an automated ILM strategy
- Gained greater visibility into file storage environment to improve planning and utilization



Solution

Trace3 recommended F5's ARX solution to facilitate the transition. By introducing intelligent file virtualization into the file storage infrastructure, ARX eliminates the disruption associated with storage administration and automates many storage management tasks. The result is a dramatic improvement in cost, agility, and efficiency.

"When I heard what ARX could do for us, I was amazed. I can't think of a better word for it," Chen says.

Chen was impressed with how well ARX complements the NetApp device, highlighting NetApp deduplication and ARX virtual snapshots in particular. "We dedupe everything and perform a virtual snapshot of all file shares as well. The ARX device works hand-in-hand with NetApp technology. ARX schedules the physical snapshots on the NetApp device, and file restore is a snap—real quick!"

Chen credits the smooth implementation to ARX's solid architecture, and the expertise of the F5 storage expert who managed the process.

"I have never seen anybody, from any company or professional services organization, like the F5 field systems engineer we worked with," he says. "He arrived here and got right to the point. He didn't waste time. He was very efficient, and we really liked that. The configuration help we got from him was tremendous. As a result, it took just a few hours to install, and then another day or so to configure the rest of the environment."

Benefit

ARX has enabled American Suzuki Motor Company to meet its users' expectations for performance while also streamlining data migrations, reducing overall storage costs,

improving backup procedures, and enhancing data management.

Seamless migration from Windows to NAS

A key part of American Suzuki Motor Company's plan to boost agility was to transition from its Windows environment to NetApp NAS. Using ARX's automated data migration policies, the company was able to execute the migration without downtime.

"We did the migration one share at a time, in the middle of the business day. No one even noticed," Chen explains. "It saved us at least a week of work."

Strategic storage tiering

The day the data migration was complete, the IT organization implemented the age-based storage tiering strategy it had developed with Trace3. All files six months old or less stay on Tier 1 Fibre Channel storage. Older data is automatically moved to more cost-effective Serial ATA (SATA) devices. Data movement is transparent to users, who continue accessing files as they always have.

The policies resulted in nearly 80 percent of the data immediately moving from Tier 1 to Tier 2, freeing up Tier 1 capacity and eliminating user complaints. It also gave the company greater freedom of choice for new disk investments.

"It doesn't matter what kind of storage is on the back end. We are going to have to purchase more storage to accommodate the capacity demands, but with this strategy in place we'll be purchasing lower-cost storage," Chen says.

Reduced backup windows and costs

Storage tiering enabled American Suzuki Motor Company to tackle its backup problems. Instead of doing weekly backups of all data, the company now performs weekly backups

of Tier 1 data only, and backs up Tier 2 less frequently. This reduced backup times from 18 hours to 1.5 hours, and resulted in considerable savings in tape costs.

"We back up less, use less, spend less," Chen says.

Greater visibility

American Suzuki Motor Company uses F5's Data Manager storage management software to see which file types are being created, who's creating them, how quickly they age, and which resources they consume. This information is invaluable for identifying trends, creating effective file management policies, and making better decisions.

"Data Manager tells you everything you need to know about the file environment," Chen says. "To fully utilize what ARX can do in terms of ILM, you have to know what you have inside your file share environment. With this visibility we can classify file formats in a very granular way, based on utilization."

Simplified data management and reliable support

Senior Network Analyst Tim Lee credits ARX with lightening the storage management burden and improving user access to data.

"After implementing ARX, our users are happy. They never complain about file shares being slow anymore because it's so easy for us to create shares when we need them. We just set it up and forget about it," Lee says.

Lee is also pleased with the reliability and flexibility of the ARX solution.

"We haven't had to call support very often, but when we have had an issue it has been resolved very quickly," he notes. "The ARX technology is stable and reliable, and the phone support is top-notch."

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