

CASE STUDY



ORGANIZATION:

Interactive Media Association

INDUSTRY:

Internet and Web services

IT ENVIRONMENT:

predominantly Windows 2003 SBS,
InforTrend storage array, 1GbE
network

CHALLENGE:

Share array for block- and
file-based data
Dynamically allocate storage
Provide data protection/backup
flexibility Increase storage perfor-
mance

SOLUTION:

RELDATA 9240 storage virtualization
appliance

BENEFITS:

Increased storage flexibility
Shared storage for block and file data
Increased performance
Improved data protection
Increased efficiency

"Without RELDATA we would have had to buy more storage and deploy different types of storage. Instead, RELDATA made storage simple and efficient for us and very cost effective."

Len Muscarella
IMA President



Interactive Media Associates (IMA), Parsippany, NJ, plans, designs, and builds websites for e-commerce and assists its clients with an array of Internet services, including content management, database applications, Web marketing, Web programming, and Web hosting. It serves high-profile clients, both commercial and not-for-profit, with complex online needs.

Background

IMA maintains a sophisticated technology infrastructure encompassing two data centers. The company maintains 2.5TB of physical data storage on an InforTrend RAID 5 array. IMA's primary onsite data center handles content generation, creative development, R&D, and all administrative functions. All customer production servers and databases reside at a remote 24x7 supervised IT facility.

Challenge

IMA requires both iSCSI block-oriented SAN storage and file-oriented NAS storage. It wanted to take advantage of the 2.5TB of array capacity for both types of data. The company also wanted to provide near-line copies of its data for fast recovery in addition to conventional tape backup. Since it works with large content-rich files, it also needed fast storage performance. "In short, we needed to be able to split our storage into different logical pieces and still have fast performance," says Brian McGovern, IMA's director of technology.

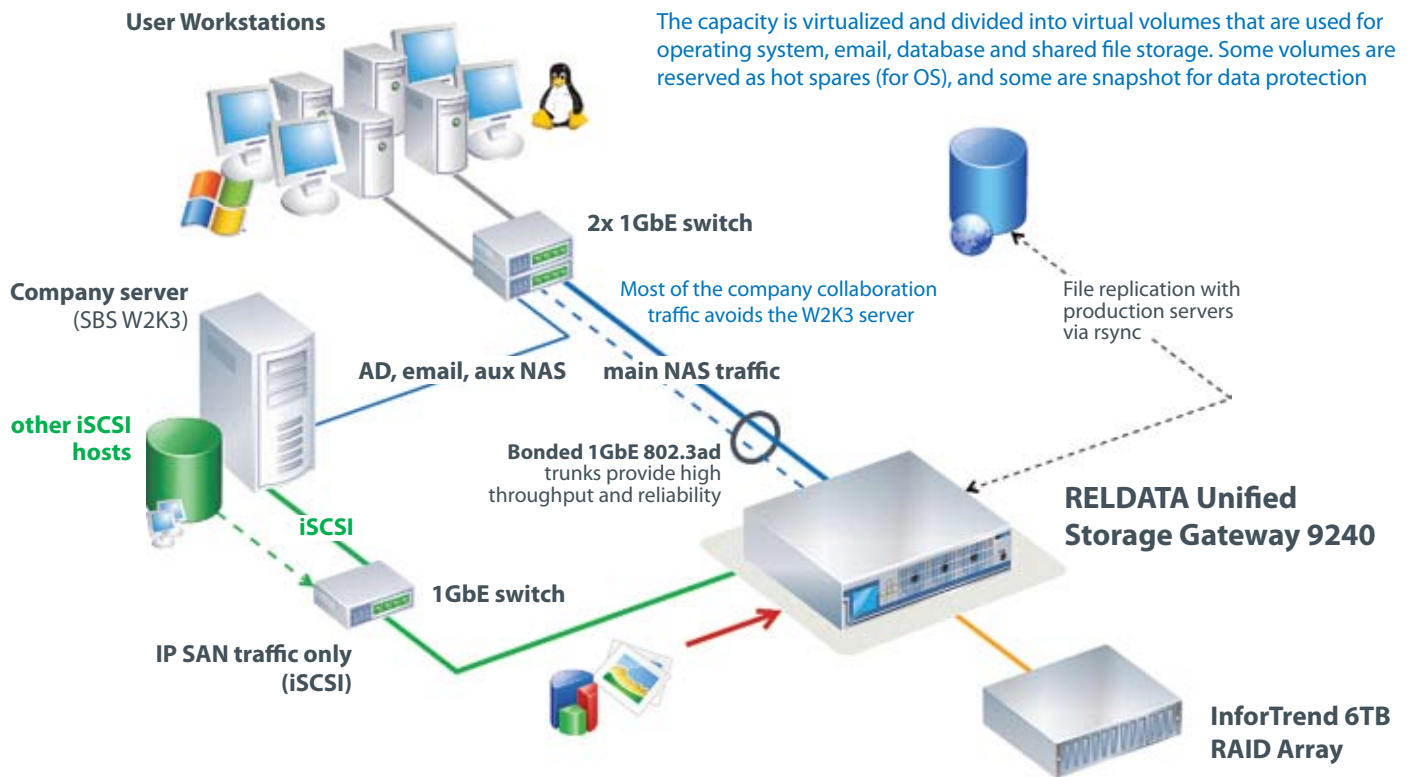
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Solution

In 2003 the company turned to RELDATA storage networking virtualization technology. The RELDATA technology enabled the company to configure, maintain, and extend logical storage volumes for both block-based access via iSCSI and file-based access via CIFS and NFS. Today, the company runs Windows 2003 SBS, Microsoft Exchange Server, a domain control, MS SQL Server, and a variety of NAS file servers all sharing the same physical storage pool through the RELDATA technology.

"We put the RELDATA storage virtualization device in front of the array and split it into NAS storage and iSCSI block storage. We can even boot Windows right off the SAN," says McGovern. The storage pool is dynamically presented to the distributed Ethernet hosts as an enterprise-wide iSCSI SAN or a CIFS/NFS NAS storage infrastructure as needed within IMA's network infrastructure.

Recently IMA upgraded its RELDATA device to the latest firmware version, which runs in 64-bit mode. The new version uses a 64-bit OS for more efficient cache RAM allocation, which speeds up the performance. The zero-copy capability of its iSCSI driver reduces latency and increases bandwidth, boosting iSCSI storage speed. In addition, a new I/O scheduler will further increase the speed of IMA's NAS and iSCSI storage. "We expect to take full advantage of the extra performance," notes McGovern.



Interactive Media Associates (SMB deployment)

Results

The RELDATA device gives IMA greater flexibility and performance in its storage as well as increasing the efficiency and productivity of its people. "The improved GUI in the new version makes it easy to allocate space for backup or create another IP share," says McGovern. In short, it lets IMA administrators dynamically allocate its 2.5TB of physical storage however they see fit. It also lets them perform functions directly on the SAN, without involving Windows 2003 Server, as well as take advantage of other servers, such as Linux servers.

In addition, IMA can now make use of RELDATA's ability to trunk multiple gigabit Ethernet links to achieve very high speed connectivity. This boosts performance not only for servers but also individual workstations where users work with large content files.

Finally, the RELDATA technology gives IMA greater flexibility when protecting data. For example, IMA can take advantage of RELDATA's various data protection and disaster recovery functions while keeping the data highly accessible. "Our users don't like to delete things so we keep four weeks of live data before moving it to tape," says McGovern.

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