Randstad's Journey to the Cloud with NetApp

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Industry
Recruitment

The Challenge
Replace legacy storage platform with one that supports virtualised desktop environment with high performance and support move into the cloud for disaster recovery platform.

The Solution
Replace HP 3PAR platform with NetApp FAS8040 AFF and NetApp Cloud ONTAP for Amazon Web Services.

Benefits
- Blistering performance
- Support and dovetails with virtualized desktop environment
- Easy and sweepingly comprehensive management
- Integration with AWS cloud
- Strong partnership for journey to the cloud

Recruitment agency Randstad had a legacy storage platform that was causing performance, capacity, and management challenges. For instance, core business apps were sometimes freezing, affecting the business. By turning to a NetApp® platform, the company not only successfully addressed these issues but also effortlessly moved its disaster recovery platform into the cloud, signaling the beginning of a wider corporate transition to the cloud.

Customer Profile

Randstad is one of the most recognised recruitment agencies in the world. Headquartered in the Netherlands, the UK operation was founded in 1964 with the opening of its first office on Wigmore Street in London's West End. Over the years it has gone from strength to strength and has established significant market share and presence.

The company's market standing increased considerably in 2008, when it acquired rival Vedior, not only propelling Randstad to become the second largest human resources provider in the world but also establishing the UK operation as one of the top recruitment consultancies.

The acquisition of Vedior helped the UK arm carve open a number of niche sectors and position it as a company with a strong and enviable legacy of high-quality service delivery. Today Randstad has a presence in major UK cities, including London, Leeds, Glasgow, and Edinburgh, and operates in a wide number of industries from construction and finance to engineering, manufacturing, and digital.

The Challenge

The company's CIO, based in the Netherlands, set a directive that within five years all IT services must be delivered from the Amazon Web Services cloud, to consolidate the company's globally diverse IT infrastructure, save cost, gain greater operational flexibility, and simplify management.

The UK operation was already well placed to move in this direction with an IT infrastructure that was largely virtualised and a thin-client desktop model. That said, its storage platform not only had reached near full capacity but also had the potential to seriously undermine the company's operations. Issues with its storage platform had in the past resulted in core business

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IT Director of Infrastructure, Randstad UK

applications freezing, which essentially had the effect of bringing front-line operations to a halt.

David Leybourne, IT director of infrastructure, Randstad UK, explains, "Our core recruitment apps are the wheels of the business. But we were running out of compute power and storage capacity. In the past this had affected application performance, which affected the business. When recruitment vacancies come in, they need to go into the system as quickly as possible to make sure the opportunities are capitalised on. If the system freezes, the opportunities are lost, and the business suffers."

Because the company has a number of core invoicing and planning applications that were not cloud ready and also required a dedicated infrastructure, it decided to replace its existing storage platform with one that could provide stability and performance.

In terms of specific requirements for a new storage platform, Randstad sought a technology that would enable the transfer of data in and out of the AWS cloud, automate the failover process, and deliver the required levels of application performance and management for both on-premises and cloud resources. NetApp partner Storm Technologies was charged with delivering the platforms.

The Solution

Randstad UK began casting around for a storage platform to replace its legacy storage. It requested demos from many of the major providers, including NetApp, Dell, HP, EMC, and Pure Storage. The potential providers where whittled down to NetApp and Pure Storage.

Pure Storage installed a proof of concept on site, and the technology impressed Randstad. However, NetApp evaluation units consisting of All Flash FAS8040 and Cloud ONTAP® ultimately won the day.

Leybourne says, "The technology provided by NetApp was clearly top drawer. The all-flash array delivered exceptionally high levels of performance, while we could also fail over into the AWS cloud by using Cloud ONTAP for disaster recovery."

The NetApp FAS8040 AFF delivers blistering performance, and its functionality dovetailed with Randstad's desktop virtualization model, meeting the highly variable I/O workload and demanding read cycles that are typical of virtualized desktop environment. It also supports the needs of power users who require predictable and consistent low latency.

At the same time, NetApp Cloud ONTAP for AWS software provides storage management from Randstad's on-premises data centre to the cloud. It offers multiple performance and capacity options from small-capacity, low-performance applications to medium-scale workloads to higher performance demands, enabling the company to easily and efficiently develop a disaster recovery platform in the AWS cloud.

Business Benefits

Gateway to the cloud
With the use of NetApp Cloud ONTAP, Randstad is able to move toward meeting its CIO's objectives by not only solving premises challenges but also gaining a pathway to the cloud and integration with AWS. Leybourne says, "Moving to the cloud is a big step even though we were well placed to do this. But NetApp Cloud ONTAP with AWS makes this simple, and the level of control it enables has made it easy to replicate our disaster recovery environment into the cloud."

Performance and capacity problems resolved
The all-flash NetApp FAS8040 is delivering blistering levels of IOPS performance that actually exceeds Randstad's current needs but underpins its confidence in the technology. At the same time, this has addressed its previous issues in which core applications would sometimes freeze, bringing business operations to a halt.

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"NetApp FAS8040 flash array is actually five to six times faster than we need, but this gives us a lot of headroom when planning for future growth because we now know we have more than enough capacity to accommodate any expansion we need," adds Leybourne.

Easy and "awesome" management
One of the compelling features of NetApp Cloud ONTAP is the easy management it enables. Randstad can now manage and report on both its on-premises and Cloud ONTAP deployments from one interface with comprehensive reporting and monitoring.

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Partnership built on confidence
The technological prowess of the NetApp technology to one side, a further compelling feature for Randstad was the confidence gained from the NetApp team. Leybourne explains, "It wasn't just a question of NetApp making a sale. They really understood our needs and were committed not only to delivering what we needed but also to helping and supporting us on our journey to the cloud."

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