Blue Label Telecoms Moves Up to Intelligent Infrastructure

VMstore

Through its local footprint of touch points which extend to the foremost retailers, petroleum forecourts, independent retailers, and wholesalers in South Africa, Blue Label Telecoms has evolved into a super distributor of virtual and physical prepaid electricity, airtime, and telephony products for mobile and fixed-line telecoms operators. "We are a distributor of 'electronic tokens of value'," explained Andrew Murray, Group CIO of Blue Label Telecoms. "We also provide online event ticketing and many other virtual transactional services for the South African market."

The Challenges: Existing Legacy SAN Needs Virtualization and Better Efficiency

Prior to purchasing its first Tintri systems in 2013, Blue Label Telecoms was using a SAN storage solution from another vendor. "We were struggling with the complexity of the legacy SAN solution," said Jonathan Trope, Blue Label Telecom's SA Distribution CIO. "Our environment was not 100% virtualized yet, and we were running out of capacity. Our IT goals for the upcoming year included fully virtualizing our production site, and upgrading our existing SAN to a faster, more efficient, and easier to use storage solution."

All of the database transactions for Blue Label Telecoms are initiated from company-owned devices in the field, or from direct integrations between the company's backend systems with local retailers and other corporate clients, including several large financial services companies. With a transaction-based business model, high performance, and reliability were also key criteria for choosing the new storage solution.

Blue Label's IT team had been using the previous vendor's management platform for the legacy environment. "There was a lot of advertised functionality with that management solution, but we were never able to get it working optimally—even when we got help from the vendor," admitted Trope. "As a result, we ended up just using the bare minimum functionality."

The Solution: Tintri VMstore Hybrid Flash Systems

Blue Label Telecoms was one of the first companies in South Africa to adopt Tintri's solution. "We did look at several other storage solutions, including some of the newer options from our existing vendor, but we didn't think that any of them were a good fit for our environment," explained Murray. "Luckily, EOH, one of Tintri's local partners, approached us and suggested we look at the VMstore."

EOH provided Blue Label Telecoms with a VMstore for proof of concept (PoC) testing. "As one of the leading technology service providers across all major industry verticals in South Africa, we're always looking to work with the most innovative and agile products available," stated Michael Leong, Enterprise Account Manager at EOH. "As a forward-thinking vendor, Tintri helps us deliver the best solutions in order to match our customers' business requirements."

"We've never been overly concerned about trying out new technologies—as long as the business case stacks up," added Murray. "We liked VMstore's ease of use, speed, and built-in interoperability with VMware. Based on the technical specifications and marketing materials we read, along with the opinions of EOH and several experts in the field, we decided to give VMstore a trial run. We were immediately impressed with VMstore's ease of use and high performance. We knew it would be a great solution for our fast-growing business."

Blue Label Telecoms purchased its first three VMstore systems in 2013. They added two hybrid flash systems for the company's production and DR sites in 2016, and an additional system for its operational center in Mexico City. Blue Label Telecoms is now running all its transactional workloads on the six VMstore systems.

Challenges

- Legacy SAN environment is difficult to manage
- Insufficient I/O for business-critical transactional systems

Solution

- Tintri VMstore™ hybrid flash systems

Results

- Eliminated daily storage management and the need to hire storage specialists
- 8x reduction in datacenter footprint and power
- Improved disaster recovery capabilities

Tintri
Intelligent Infrastructure

The Results: Simplified Management, Smaller Footprint

Storage management is much simpler with VMstore, according to Trope. "By moving to VMstore, we went from having to work on the SAN solution daily, to the point where we can almost forget about our storage systems. VMstore just works flawlessly in the background. It was very simple to configure, and the platform is extremely reliable."

"The introduction of Tintri Global Center was also quite helpful," added Murray. "Being able to manage and track capacity usage across all six of our VMstore systems—including the one in Mexico—using a single interface, has added to our time savings. VMstore has significantly increased the I/O for all of our key databases."

Blue Label Telecom employs a team of six IT engineers for its server, storage, networking, and virtualization environment. "All of our team members are multidisciplinary engineers, not just storage specialists," explained Murray. "They must be proficient in multiple areas, including VMware and VMstore. This is not a complicated solution to use. The fact that all our engineers are proficient using the VMstore backend—as well as a host of other technologies—is one of the appealing things about VMstore. It's an excellent solution for any company with a small IT team."

"Having a solution that's as simple as VMstore is very important for the South African market," added Trope. "There's definitely a shortage of technology specialists in our region. When you don't have to rely on highly skilled individuals to run your storage, life is a lot easier as an IT manager."

VMstore has also enabled Blue Label Telecoms to reduce its datacenter footprint, while simultaneously gaining additional capacity for disaster recovery. "We went from 96RU of our legacy SAN infrastructure, to just 12RU with VMstore," Trope said. "We were able to reduce our power and cooling requirements by 8x as well. With the space-efficient VMstore systems, we now have extra capacity for our DR site."

Blue Label Telecoms is now evaluating additional use cases for its VMstore systems. "We would love to deploy virtual desktops to all of our internal users within the next twelve to eighteen months," Trope said. "VMstore is an excellent platform for VDI and would be a great choice for this project."

"Our Tintri partner EOH occasionally asks us to serve as a Tintri reference when they're engaging with new prospects," concluded Murray. "I have no hesitation in recommending the Tintri VMstore systems. It takes very little effort to manage the solution, it provides great performance, and it's a very reliable platform. With VMstore, we don't have to constantly wonder if our storage is going to fail anymore—it's a rock-solid product."

Experience Different! For more information on how Tintri VMstore can turbo-charge your business success through a simple, Intelligent Infrastructure, visit tintri.com/vmstore.

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