

Visa International



Visa sees the benefit from EMC's Information Lifecycle Management Strategy

Using a Visa card, people can pay anywhere, anytime, anyway. There are similar parallels with the organisation's new EMC Information Lifecycle Management strategy. By unifying its storage infrastructure, this global payment system is making certain critical information is available anywhere, anytime, anyway in an efficient, high performance environment. Next time you use your card, remember that it is EMC that helped make the transaction happen in Europe.

Visa International is a membership association owned by 21,000 financial institutions worldwide. The organisation provides products, systems and services for banks and other organisations that are members of Visa. It also helps to create standards for global interoperability, security and new technologies, so customers can pay with Visa however they choose. In the European Union, Visa's members have issued more than 211 million Visa credit and debit cards.

In 2003, Visa cardholders in Europe spent more than €824 billion on their cards, representing a total of 12.3 billion transactions. In the EU, Visa used to rely on an application-centric storage infrastructure to enable these transactions. All storage relating to payment card transactions between member banks, clearing and settlement, information services, and anti-fraud detection solutions resided in discrete storage silos, relating to the particular application. As Chris Reveley, Senior Vice-President – Head of Operations, explains, Visa always needs to deliver an efficient, always-available service to its members and cardholders.



“We were experiencing some reliability problems with our locally attached storage hardware and software,” he says. “It was apparent that we would gain a lot from shifting away from our inflexible, application-focused storage solutions to a unified, comprehensive storage solution, based on a storage area network. This SAN environment would enhance our ability to manage data whichever way we wanted in a cost-effective and resilient manner.”

Consolidated Information Infrastructure

There were three key business issues surrounding the adoption of this storage strategy. Firstly, by storing data as a single entity and sharing it between applications, an integrated infrastructure would reduce duplication of data. Secondly, the discrete storage approach demanded significant capacity to be available for each application: in the unified environment, storage capacity would be pooled for greater efficiency. Thirdly, the SAN hardware and software capabilities were the way to create a highly resilient, continuously available environment. And in all of this, Visa wanted to partner with a visionary company with the product depth and breadth, and implementation experience to assure their success.



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—Chris Reveley, Senior Vice-President - Head of Operations, Visa

Visa didn't need to look far. EMC already had a solid track record in providing highly available, efficient information lifecycle management in other parts of the business, and Reveley called them in. “We evaluated EMC against two other major players,” he says. “We were very impressed with the calibre of the EMC people we met. Their business is dedicated solely to storage and they understand it very well. Their professionalism, commitment and understanding of our financial and technical challenges shone through. We were already aware of the business continuity functionality of the EMC hardware and software, but our visit to their Customer Briefing Centre and manufacturing plant in Cork, Ireland helped to confirm our choice. The stringent product testing and quality assurance we witnessed confirmed the reliability and resilience of their systems is second to none.”

These factors—together with a compelling finance model that involved an innovative leasing approach, buying out Visa's old disk technology, and deferring warranty payments—sealed the deal. By standardising on an EMC Information Lifecycle Management strategy, Visa has created a unified, enterprise-wide storage infrastructure. Data is managed across two sites in the South of England using five EMC Symmetrix DMX1000™ storage subsystems and one EMC Symmetrix® 8530. An additional EMC Symmetrix DMX3000™ has been deployed as part of a data warehousing strategy. The Information Solutions Consulting Group (ISC)—a joint offering between EMC and Accenture to provide independent storage consulting—played a pivotal role in the design of the SAN environment.

Eliminated Outages

Visa is realising significant value from this strategy. Hardware outages have virtually disappeared, resulting in a continuous, uninterrupted service to members. Information can now also be shared more quickly and easily throughout the business—accelerating decision-making and the time to market for new applications and services. And Visa expects to realise significant cost reductions in the longer term. “We have a high degree of confidence in the EMC infrastructure. It represents a best-of-breed storage solution from a leading player in the market,” Reveley adds.



“We are advancing on our journey towards an end-to-end Information Lifecycle Management strategy and the product range from EMC provides us with appropriate solutions for varying types of data we need to manage.”

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So what lies ahead now that this next-generation storage environment is in production? Visa recently took delivery of an EMC CLARiiON® CX700 array for testing and development purposes and is currently evaluating whether an EMC Centera Content Addressed Storage (CAS) solution is the right system to archive imaging data. “We are advancing on our journey towards an end-to-end Information Lifecycle Management strategy and the product range from EMC provides us with appropriate solutions for varying types of data we need to manage. We greatly value the professional working relationship with EMC and their proven ability to support us in this journey,” he concludes.

EMC²

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