

— AMERICA'S —
TEST KITCHEN

CASE STUDY



INTRODUCTION

StorONE helps media publishing company, America's Test Kitchen, cost effectively solve their large scale data backup and archiving challenge while laying the foundation for them to also move ahead with their plans to start the process of consolidating all their storage silos onto a single platform.



BACKGROUND

America's Test Kitchen (ATK) is where curious cooks become confident cooks. A media and publishing company based in Boston, ATK produces unique and original content for television, video, websites, podcasts, printed magazines and books.

They operate in a hybrid cloud environment with large amounts of on-premises equipment which is divided into two main groups; production group virtualization and data storage. In addition to VMware, they use several different types of storage technologies. Their cloud presence is used for some small internally used applications and business continuity storage in S3 buckets for NAS backups and virtualization backups.

ATK uses an Isilon System with approximately 180 TB of storage, which is used to store active hot projects in TV and video production. This is approximately one season's worth of each show plus associated video cuts for the web. This data is later archived into a colder storage tier. They use a NetApp as their internal file server for general office files. The NetApp has approximately 60 TB of storage.

A little more than a year ago, ATK acquired two WD Ultrastar 102 systems with approximately 1 PB of storage per unit, which would store "cold" archive data. They also wanted to use these Ultrastar systems to eliminate their LTO storage libraries which were creating many operational problems and costs.

PROJECT GOALS

Their initial use of StorONE was primarily focused on archiving their large rich media content as well as improving business continuity of these assets. Retaining access to their 20+ years of content is critical to the company. Losing track of any of this data or losing the data itself, would be a major problem for IT. Archiving this data would also enable them to free up space on their more expensive Isilon and NetApp storage systems.

Due to their limited IT staff, they needed a simple, cost-effective solution that was fairly turnkey and that would open up the use of that 2 PB of storage so they could efficiently migrate “cold” data to it. The Western Digital Ultrastars provided them with the raw capacity, but they needed a solution to help them manage it as well as protect the valuable data assets placed on it. Finally, they needed a system that was simple to learn and easy to operate.



CASE EVALUATION

The issues the customer faced are fairly common for most businesses today. The problems companies have with any storage hardware today is due to the fact that these systems are driven by 20+ year old storage system software and an equally obsolete Storage IO Stack. These legacy software stacks can't take full advantage of the full performance or capacity found in new drive and networking technology.

The research was led by Dustin Brandt, Director of IT at ATK. After examining and testing a wide variety of solutions with unsatisfactory results, he contacted a solutions integrator they work with, discussed their archive problem and their requirements for a solution. The integrator suggested that they examine the StorONE Enterprise Platform solution. StorONE created the new S1 Enterprise Storage Platform by completely rewriting the storage system software and flattening the old Storage IO Stack. With StorONE, customers can extract maximum performance and capacity while achieving unprecedented levels of data protection and integrity.

SOLUTION

After an initial evaluation, ATK deployed the StorONE solution. Brandt believes that StorONE has been a great addition that lets them easily archive their colder Isilon video content. Given the reliability of the solution, ATK expanded to using it for some of their VMware virtual machines (VM). One of those VMs hosts a cloud-to-cloud migration tool they are using to migrate data from Dropbox to Google. They have been using StorONE for approximately 18 months now and it has also helped them identify and understand what is on the Isilon and what is “hot”, what is “warm” and what is “cold” as well being able to make determinations about how to move that content.

In addition to the expansion from archive to hosting VMware images, ATK is also using StorONE as a backup storage target for their Rubrik backups. They found that StorONE enables them to quickly offload old backups from their Rubrik repository and eliminates the need to replicate that data to the cloud. Also, with StorONE’s flash storage tier, they can use StorONE for “instant recoveries” so that recovered VMs will receive production-class performance.

Brandt also appreciates the short ramp up time into the StorONE platform. He can quickly and easily provision workloads, as soon as the need arises. They are essentially using it as a secondary storage “catch-all” to address new projects that are important to properly support their users.

Most recently, they’ve used the StorONE system as an NFS server for their VMware environment and as an SMB server share. This provides them with a window into their archive content which they can search simply and quickly for specific content.

They are very satisfied with the StorONE solution’s flexibility and simplicity. The simplicity in particular was the most important thing for them. As Brandt said, “Storage is not my joy in life; I just need it to work”.

FUTURE STEPS

Their future plans for the StorONE platform include getting more flash media and setting up a more robust business continuity environment. They currently have their two VMware environments and replication along with cloud based backup and DR systems but they would like to have a more robust cloned environment where they could replicate across the VMware environment as well as cloning machines and spinning them up where they could check patch levels and make other tests.



CONCLUSION: HOW DOES STORONE MAKE THIS POSSIBLE?

ATK is a common but ideal example of our customers' journeys. Most customers start working with StorONE to solve a specific use case like backup and archive. Then as new workloads present themselves or as old storage systems reach end of life, our customers move those workloads to the StorONE Enterprise Platform. This practical approach to storage consolidation enables our customers to achieve complete, long-lasting consolidation with confidence.

StorONE spent its first eight years rewriting and collapsing the storage IO stack, creating an efficient storage engine that extracts maximum performance and capacity from storage hardware, while delivering the industry's best level of data integrity and protection.

Integrated into the storage engine is StorONE's volume isolation technology that enables customers like ATK to set unique volume characteristics per workload. Each volume can have unique attributes in terms of capacity, performance, drive redundancy, snapshots and replication level without having to dedicate specific drives to specific volumes. The customer is free from having to manage individual devices.

Our volume isolation technology enables our enterprise storage platform customers to start with one workload like backup and later integrate workloads as diverse as databases or even HPC without compromising performance or data integrity. We call it Practical Storage Consolidation; you'll call it peace of mind! To learn more visit www.storone.com.

