ITA Group Recognizes Western Digital as a Superior Upgrade to Adding Storage Capacity to Existing Legacy Solution

A leader in events, incentives and recognition programs, ITA Group works with companies of all sizes in all industries to motivate their employees to achieve better results and greater success. Based in West Des Moines, Iowa, ITA Group employs more than 500 people in regional offices across the country to help its clients ignite passion, purpose and potential in their people.

Believing in the tenets of financial integrity, operational quality and efficiency, ITA Group leverages technological innovation to ensure a fully configurable approach to support its clients' businesses. This approach enables ITA Group to help companies overcome the roadblocks to their success by increasing sales and market share, customer satisfaction, product and brand awareness, sales training, and employee motivation and retention.

The Challenge: Expanding Storage Capacity and Capabilities Without Breaking the Bank

ITA Group began experiencing performance and growth concerns with its existing legacy infrastructure. The company engaged the vendor about adding disk space and the suggested upgrades proved to be "truly expensive." For the quoted price, ITA Group discovered it could implement new hybrid arrays rather than just expand capacity of its existing storage. They reached out to several vendors, including Western Digital for what was described as an “in-house bake off.”

Meeting ITA Group's requirements of two storage arrays with 30TB of usable disk space, all three companies' products hit the desired 90,000 IOPS, but only IntelliFlash arrays provided inline deduplication and compression to offer additional disk savings that would stave off further hardware refreshes in the near future.

"The biggest thing we saw was IntelliFlash’s data reduction," said Todd Volz, Network Engineer at ITA Group. "The cost savings from that were close to the price of upgrading the legacy solution. IntelliFlash allowed us to come in under budget compared to the storage upgrade, which our managers really liked."

The Solution: IntelliFlash Data Reduction Makes Big Impact on ITA Group's VM Environment

ITA Group reduced their disk space by 60% by leveraging IntelliFlash’s inline data deduplication and compression. With nearly 500 VMs and another 200 planned for the near future, ITA Group needed a solution that could minimize the impact of replicated and duplicated data and system disks within its highly virtualized VMware View® environment.

“We have a fairly large number of virtual machines in our environment,” said Volz. “Each of our arrays supports about 240 VMs. That’s a lot of system disks and things like that, which are replicated and duplicated against every single virtual machine. IntelliFlash’s deduplication and compression is very good and we’ve seen some really big savings that way.”
IntelliFlash arrays provide consistent performance and end-user response times for hundreds and even thousands of desktops. IntelliFlash inline deduplication technology eliminates duplicate blocks of data across OS images, application binaries, and user data for VMware View. Data compression further reduces the storage footprint, providing data reduction ratios of up to 10:1. Moreover, inline deduplication and compression act as performance multipliers by maximizing the use of flash storage in the arrays.

IntelliFlash arrays are fully redundant with no single point of failure. The bundled features include VM-consistent, space-efficient snapshots, and bandwidth-efficient remote replication. With Western Digital, organizations have comprehensive data protection and high availability, ensuring 24 X 7 desktop and data availability for end-users.

The Result: IntelliFlash's Functionality, Support Allows ITA Group to Expand Initial Use from VDI Platform to Supporting Databases

ITA Group has implemented Western Digital in two data centers in separate locations for high availability and disaster recovery purposes, using IntelliFlash's built-in replication feature to copy data between controllers.

Volz said that he also likes IntelliFlash's reporting functionality, with an easy-to-use dashboard that provides real-time information about his system. The reporting tools let him know how much disk space is being consumed and the I/O load based on protocol, which Volz said is helpful because they utilize multiple protocols.

In addition to expanding the VDI load of the system to accommodate another 200 or so VMs in the near future, ITA Group has also expanded the use of the IntelliFlash system beyond virtualization. The company is also testing some of its SQL and Exchange databases on the arrays.

"With how we have budgeting – how we have to depreciate our other equipment – I don't expect to move too many other workloads over to it, but we don't expect IntelliFlash couldn't handle it," said Volz. "In fact, I'm very impressed with Tegile's (now Western Digital's) customer support. We had an issue come up during our proof-of-concept testing that impacted our workload and how they handled it ... I couldn't expect anything better. They are extremely responsive."

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