



Reduce Complexity

Improve Flexibility

Service Catalogue

Enable Automation

Fast growing Alliance Pharmacy builds a consolidated data and storage management infrastructure with Tectrade

Challenge

Support rapid business growth with scalable storage environment; improve archived email management; simplify storage infrastructure and management to keep administration and maintenance costs low; increase performance and reliability of storage environment.

Solution

Worked with Tectrade to implement a new Storage Area Network (SAN), deploying IBM Tivoli Storage Manager and Symantec Enterprise Vault on an IBM xSeries 365 server, with an IBM TotalStorage DS4300 disk system and an IBM 3584 Tape Library.

Benefits

Single point of control makes storage management simple; automated backups save staff time; restoring from disk instead of tape reduces recovery times; better email management keeps storage demands low while facilitating rapid restoration of vital information.

Alliance Pharmacy chose Tectrade to come up with a strategy to simplify its storage infrastructure, automate management, and provide a better archiving solution for company emails. The Tectrade solution, based on IBM TotalStorage technologies and Symantec Enterprise Vault software, cuts administrative costs and improves recovery times, providing a reliable environment for the storage of business-critical information.

Alliance Pharmacy, part of the Unichem group, is one of the top three pharmaceutical retailers in the UK. The company has grown rapidly, running more than 800 stores across the country, employing 8,000 people and dispensing around 70 million prescriptions per year.

Alliance Pharmacy's growth has been accelerated by its recent acquisition of Bairds Chemists, a chain which owned 51 pharmacies across Northern Ireland. The integration of these new branches into the Alliance Pharmacy organisation, together with the pressures of complying with the New Pharmacy Contract – a government initiative requiring frequent Medicine Use Reviews for all customers on long-term medication – was putting a strain on the company's IT infrastructure.

"Alliance is always looking to acquire new pharmacies, so the company is growing very fast", explains Micha Mocevic, Senior Technical Analyst at Alliance Pharmacy. "Without a coherent IT strategy to match business growth, our infrastructure was becoming unmanageable, with local storage scattered all over the organisation – fine for a small business, but not the large enterprise Alliance has become."

Infrastructure Objectives

Storage Consolidation

- Centralised Storage
- Mid-Range Disk

Data Protection

- Enterprise Backup & Recovery

Information Management

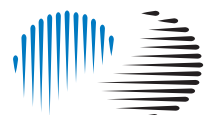
- Email Archiving

Key Deliverables

- Single point of control
- Recovery from disk rather than tape
- Reduced management time for backup & recovery
- Improved email management
- Improved recovery of email information

"Backups and disaster recovery were slow processes – and we were replacing 20 tapes a day, which used up skilled resources."

Micha Mocevic, Senior Technical Analyst



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The existing storage architecture at Alliance Pharmacy employed a variety of different backup technologies, with most systems backed up to locally connected tape drives. This caused media management issues, led to complex and lengthy recoveries even for single files, and necessitated heavy use of expensive tape libraries.

Expert assistance from Tectrade

Alliance Pharmacy constructed a new data centre to consolidate its IT environment, and consulted Tectrade on the design of a new data protection environment to resolve restoration and recovery issues.

"Tectrade is a true storage specialist," says Micha Mocevic. "Their consultants were able to translate our business needs into technological requirements, and we were confident that their solution would deliver optimum value for the amount invested. And because they work so closely with IBM, they really understand the technology and can offer first-class support."

Tectrade worked with Alliance Pharmacy to implement IBM Tivoli Storage Manager (TSM), running on an IBM xSeries 365 server, with an IBM DS4300 disk system to handle the TSM storage pool. By storing data on disks before transferring it to a new IBM 3584 Tape Library, TSM accelerates backup and enables multiple jobs to be carried out at once, which enables Alliance Pharmacy to stay within tight backup windows.

"Because Tivoli allows us to restore recent data directly from disk, the process is much faster", explains Micha Mocevic. "And with Tivoli's ability to backup incrementally, we save tape space, which reduces our media costs and the amount of manual processing."

Reliable backup

TSM provides a single, policy-driven point of control for data management, standardised across all servers. Tectrade designed and implemented TSM policies to suit Alliance Pharmacy's business needs, so backups now run automatically on the right systems at the right times, and generate detailed status reports, saving time and reducing workload for busy IT staff.

"Before, we would have to check each overnight run, which was more or less a full-time job", comments Micha Mocevic. "Now we have confidence in the validity of the backups, so staff can spend more time on business services that really add value to the company."

High-speed archiving

Tectrade also deployed Symantec Enterprise Vault to provide a simple search and restore solution for Alliance Pharmacy's archived email.

"Enterprise Vault has enabled us to keep control of mailbox sizes, which were growing larger and larger. Now we can set a 100MB limit and archive it down to 40MB every night, without affecting the performance of Microsoft Exchange. Emails are stored as single files in the vault, which works well with the incremental backup capacity of TSM, and users can search and restore archived volumes very quickly."

"Besides increasing the speed and reliability of our email archiving, Enterprise Vault keeps cost low, since we no longer have to store archives on expensive, high-speed disks. With around 2,000 users, that can make a big difference," explains Micha Mocevic."

Enterprise-class solution

The Tectrade solution gives Alliance Pharmacy a higher degree of control over its storage environment and greatly improved resilience for its data protection systems. By reducing the company's reliance on tape storage, the solution improves performance of backup and restore operations, increasing business productivity and reducing IT workload.

Further, by taking advantage of TSM's incremental backup functionality, monitoring facilities and policy-driven automation, the company has been able to make better use of storage capacity while increasing reliability and simplifying data management with a single point of control. Email archives can be searched and restored quickly with KVS Enterprise Vault.

"The combination of TSM and Symantec Enterprise Vault has given us a high-performance, easy-to-manage backup and recovery solution", concludes Micha Mocevic. "Tectrade has provided an enterprise-class solution, dramatically improving performance and protecting our data while keeping costs low."

Vendor Alliances on this project

Brocade
IBM
Symantec
Tivoli

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Head Office & Customer Centre
No.1&2 Godalming Business Centre
Woolsack Way
Godalming, Surrey
GU7 1XW
Tel. +44 (0)1483 861448
Fax. +44 (0)1483 861449
Email. info@tectrade.co.uk
www.tectrade.co.uk

Northern Sales Office
Harrogate, Yorkshire
Tel. + 44 (0)1423 340942
Fax. + 44 (0)1423 340945
Email. info@tectrade.co.uk

Scottish Sales Office
Edinburgh, Scotland
Tel: +44 (0)131 718 6077
Fax: +44 (0)131 718 6100
Email. info@tectrade.co.uk

Netherlands Office
Tectrade BV
Brenkmanweg 8
4105 DH Culemborg
Nederland
Tel. +31 (0)345 547040
Fax. +31 (0)345 520422
Email. sales@tectrade.nl
www.tectrade.nl