

Leading Bay Area Accounting Firm deploys Automatrix platform to Boost Revenue and Improve Business Continuity



SENSIBA SAN FILIPPO CASE STUDY



Financial Services
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Challenge

Traditional arrays were unable to deliver true performance gains and cloud backup alternatives were complex and expensive.

Results

- Leveraged existing blade servers
- Greater productivity and revenue from 150x lower latency
- 6x faster provisioning
- 200x better RPO, with no performance hit
- Recovery in seconds; 45x faster

“The biggest driver for choosing Datrium Cloud DVX was its simplicity and cost effectiveness. Datrium has always followed through on the time- and money-savings they have promised.”

Igor Zaika
IT Director

Company Challenge

No Confidence in a Future with Arrays

SSF serves its distributed work force – many of whom work remotely – through a fully virtualized IT environment. The challenge, however, is maintaining desktop and server application performance levels across data-intensive applications such as its practice management software, Microsoft Exchange, a document management system and a SQL backend.

Over the years, SSF has tried multiple traditional storage solutions coupled with its blade environment, including HP StorageWorks and Nimble Storage. Not only were performance and scalability a challenge, troubleshooting and visibility of its VM-based storage IO was difficult.

“I didn’t have confidence that we could get the IO performance we needed going forward with HP and Nimble,” Zaika says. “I couldn’t understand why with every system we bought, we saw similar performance, no matter how much of an improvement I was promised. It seemed to us that we had reached the end of the road with a SAN-based architecture given what we’re trying to do.”

When considering a replacement, Zaika looked at both storage arrays as well as hyperconverged infrastructure solutions, with the #1 goal being simplicity. “Many storage array solutions advertise simplicity, but when we started digging, we found the opposite to be true,” Zaika says. “On the surface they looked simple, but were actually really complex to manage and maintain.”

With the HCI solutions Zaika investigated, simplicity advantages were offset by the need to replace his entire blade server infrastructure, a tradeoff SSF was unwilling to make. In addition to high acquisition costs, Zaika was also concerned about HCI’s high cost of growth, especially after learning that a fourth HCI node would cost as much as the first 3 nodes combined.

Zaika also wanted to move off his existing disaster recovery solution and bolster the company’s business continuity. With the incumbent hosted backup provider, they incurred high monthly costs, needed months to transfer data to the data center on the opposite coast, came with long recovery times, and were disappointed with the level of support.

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Igor Zaika
IT Director

Results

VM-Centric Simplicity and Unbeatable Economics

Instead, SSF chose Datrium’s Automatrix platform, which converges primary storage, backup, DR, encryption and mobility. The solution fit into the firm’s existing infrastructure without any rip and replace, and offered the simplicity SSF sought. “I was looking for a solution that was not only affordable for a business like ours, but also delivered benefits right out of the gate. Scalability, stability and simplicity of management were all high on the list,” Zaika says. “Datrium delivered all that in a very elegant software defined convergence solution.”

The ‘elegance’ Zaika refers to is delivered in part with Datrium’s VM-centric management, allowing SSF to manage capacity for its VMs directly from the vSphere interface. Zaika also appreciated having a big-picture view of the infrastructure with Datrium’s built-in, real-time VM analytics. “VM traffic is always an elusive fish,” he says. “Now I can see it clearly – data flows, connectivity, latency and optimizations – so I always know what’s going on.”

Scalable Performance Boosts Revenue

In moving all applications to Datrium, SSF saw noticeable performance gains, which translated directly to productivity and ultimately increased billable hours for SSF accountants. With the practice management application where SQL performance lagged previously, Zaika has eliminated user complaints entirely since the move to Datrium. User boot times are down by 40 percent, while servers come up considerably faster than they did with Nimble Storage. On the Exchange server, latency dropped from 150 milliseconds to approximately 1 millisecond with Datrium – gains that have increased productivity for remote employees in particular.

Datrium DVX host software offloads read IO from the network to local server flash, and accelerates writes to a persistent data node. Reads effectively never leave the host, avoiding SAN queuing delays, and scale linearly with the addition of new servers. “Here at SSF, productivity improvements translate directly to more billable hours and more revenue,” Zaika says. “Since we installed Datrium, the performance gains we are seeing are absolutely having an impact on the firm’s bottom line.”

For Zaika, the real test came in provisioning master images in SSF’s VDI environment. For golden image updates, one of Zaika’s biggest performance challenges was copying a 70G image from one location to another, which took an hour on average. With Datrium, SSF reduced that time to an average of 10 minutes per master image – a 6X improvement.

Reinforcing Business Continuity with Datrium

When the firm began looking for a new DR solution to bolster business continuity, again Zaika turned to Datrium. After evaluating half a dozen vendors, Zaika felt most confident in Datrium Cloud DVX.

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With the move to Cloud DVX, within a month, the entire dataset was in Amazon Web Services (AWS). By comparison, it took months to get the complete dataset over with the legacy backup solution.



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Using Datrium, SSF replicates between two Datrium data nodes every half hour and then backs up both to a single Cloud DVX nightly. Before, SSF took snapshots once a day, at best, because of performance drags. Since the move to Cloud DVX, the firm has experienced zero impact on performance during snapshotting, and now captures about 200 snapshots a day. When the firm needs to recover data, they can do so in seconds, versus approximately 45 minutes before.

“We see no performance degradation for snapshotting or restores, even with more than 200 snaps a day,” Zaika said.

Along with a stronger business continuity strategy, the firm also reduced its monthly costs.

‘Why I Tell Others about Datrium’

From first contact through ongoing support, SSF found interaction with Datrium refreshing. “First, the sales cycle didn’t feel like sales,” he says. “It felt more like a personal relationship. I’ve also had situations where Datrium support called me proactively about issues that were not even Datrium related. The combination of strong support and the Datrium architecture, are why I tell others about Datrium.”

About Sensiba San Filippo

Serving the Bay Area for 40 years, Sensiba San Filippo LLP (SSF) ranks among the region’s top 10 public accounting firms. Now with six locations, SSF provides comprehensive assurance, tax and consulting services, bringing global expertise with a regional focus.

Learn more about Datrium at www.datrium.com.

