Solutions:
- **Backup, recovery and archiving**
- **Data consolidation and management**

Equal sharing

Software company sees file sharing performance rise by up to 82 per cent with Dell EqualLogic storage

Cost effective, scalable, simple and secure: these are the main characteristics sought by IT professionals when they purchase storage. Finding one or two of these attributes in a single device is relatively easy, but finding all four is more difficult. And, as data requirements increase in size and complexity, the need for affordable, intuitive solutions grows.

Customer profile
Company: EBP Informatique
Industry: Technology
Country: France
Founded: 1984
Employees: 320
**Website**: www.ebp.com

Challenge
EBP Informatique wanted to deploy SAP ERP, but needed more flexible storage. It sought a centralised solution.

Solution
The software firm implemented a Dell EqualLogic virtualized iSCSI storage solution and opted for Dell ProSupport for IT with Mission Critical option.

Benefits
- Testing completed in 10 days, deployment in three days
- Simplified management saves 10 days per person a year
- Fast data access and transfer prove ideal for SAP
- File sharing performance rises by up to 82 per cent
- Online backup boosts security
- ProSupport for IT protects investment
- Peer provisioning automates scaling
- All-inclusive pricing avoids surprises
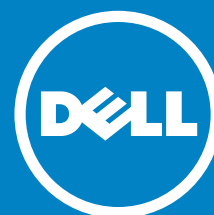
EBP Informatique develops management, accounting payment software for small and medium-sized businesses. Customers in a wide range of industries – from construction to commerce – rely on EBP applications to create, track and analyse business chain data. The company strengthens these offerings with training and technical support, helping customers successfully manage mission-critical resources.

EBP has grown steadily since 2001, with an eight per cent increase in turnover between 2007 and 2008. It now has 320 staff, 120 of which are developers and technicians. In addition to its head office in Rambouillet, France, EBP has subsidiaries in Belgium and Spain.

With continued expansion forecast for the forthcoming year, the IT team saw that the company was outgrowing its enterprise resource planning (ERP) system. Jerome Béarel, Information Systems Director at EBP Informatique, explains: "Our role is to make sure that all employees – from developers to account managers – are supported by reliable software and hardware. When it comes to sales and customer services, the smooth flow of data underpins every transaction, so it's essential to have appropriate ERP technology."

Béarel and his colleagues soon identified SAP ERP ECC 6.0 as a solution capable of supporting the larger workforce. But, the rollout called for new storage capabilities, including increased file sharing and installation of multiple servers using iSCSI connections.

"Our existing server-attached storage was provided by Dell, as is 99.9 per cent of our hardware. We were happy with its performance, but SAP brought new requirements," says Béarel.

The company decided to install a storage area network (SAN), taking advantage of its eight-year relationship with Dell to evaluate potential solutions. Early on in the process, the Dell account team suggested that Béarel consider the Dell EqualLogic virtualized PS series SANs. A webcast provided by Dell gave the team a strong understanding of the technology. After this, Béarel and his team attended a live product demonstration at the Solution Innovation Centre in Limerick, before borrowing an array for testing and benchmarking purposes.

"We considered Dell and NetApp for our SAN solution, but Dell presented the EqualLogic SANs so simply and effectively that there was almost no
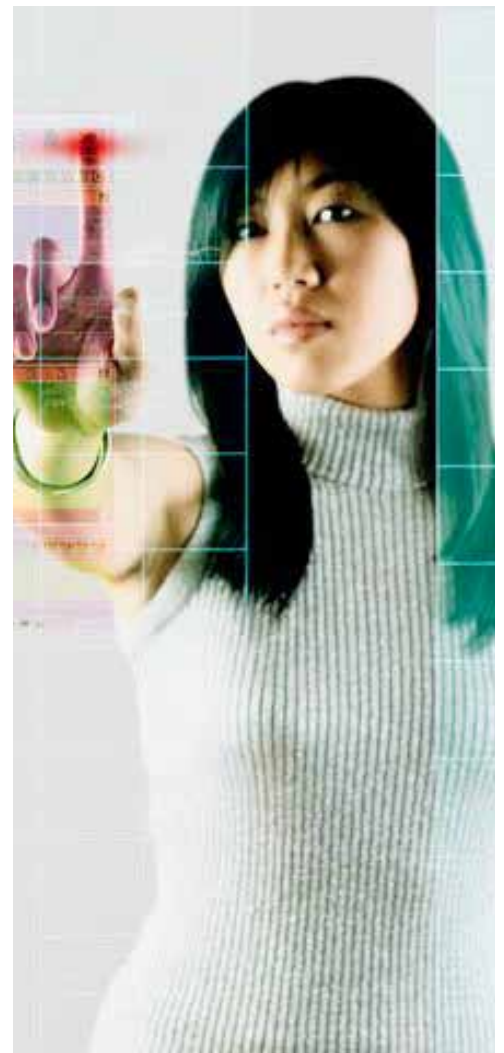
"Since implementing our Dell EqualLogic PS5000XV SAN, we've seen file sharing performance rise by 82 per cent for small files and by 35 per cent for files of 500 megabytes and bigger."

Jerome Béarel, Information Systems Director, EBP Informatique

contest. The solution from Dell was also more cost effective," Béarel says. "With Dell, I feel that I'm getting comprehensive, accurate information on products, and I always make my purchases with confidence."

The SANs also offered rapid deployment and simple management, while satisfying all the requirements of the SAP ERP software. The company chose the Dell EqualLogic PS5000XV SAN, an array designed to support enterprise applications. This includes 16 SAS hot-pluggable hard disk drives, offering high performance for online transaction processing applications such as SAP ERP. Built-in software functionality automates many backup and recovery processes, while virtual storage

allocation allows seamless expansion to meet fluctuations in demand.

EBP began by deploying four Dell™ PowerEdge™ R900 servers with powerful Intel® Xeon® 7400 Processors. These run SAP ERP, using a Windows Server® 2003 operating system. "We chose the PowerEdge R900 because it was the model best suited to SAP specifications and the one that we felt could deal with an increased load," says Béarel. Dell provided the company with a Dell EqualLogic PS5000XV storage area network (SAN) to allow thorough testing and benchmarking against three criteria: availability, usability and performance. Satisfied with the performance of the infrastructure, EBP bought and installed a PS5000XV SAN.

"Our Dell EqualLogic array and Dell servers were so simple to install that we managed the deployment seamlessly, without needing assistance – we haven't had a single problem since," says Béarel. "And because we kept our loaned SAN until the purchased SAN arrived, all we had to do was migrate the test environment to a production environment. In other words, we made the move without affecting business continuity." In addition to its principal function, EBP decided to use the SAN to store the large virtual images that replicate the company's production environment.

All hardware at EBP is covered by the Dell ProSupport for IT Mission Critical option, with four-hour on-site response to secure optimum uptime. The IT team also opted for Fast-Track Dispatch, which means team members can order parts based on their own diagnoses, rather than engaging Dell technicians for basic troubleshooting.

Fast data access and transfer provide ideal foundation for SAP

At EBP, access to data underpins hundreds of transactions every day – transactions that process orders and invoices, keep the company's supply chain moving, and deliver communications to customers. It follows that the faster employees can read and modify files using the company network, the more effectively they can complete transactions.

With the introduction of Dell EqualLogic storage, file sharing performance has risen significantly. Says Béarel: "Since implementing our Dell EqualLogic PS5000XV SAN, we've seen file sharing performance rise by 82 per cent for

small files and by 35 per cent for files of 500 megabytes and bigger."

Importantly, this gives employees fast, reliable access to the large volumes of mission-critical data processed and managed using SAP ERP. In turn, this helps EBP to assimilate real-time data across core business functions, from business to stock management.

Simplified management saves time

"When we implement a technology, we're always mindful of the level of complexity and new skills involved," Béarel says. "For a system to be productive and cost effective, it has to be simple. The PS5000XV is easy to administrate, and the guidance we received on how to deploy and maintain it was concise and comprehensive."

The SAN offers rapid installation and intuitive maintenance. "Our Dell EqualLogic PS5000XV arrived pre-assembled on a palette. We deployed it in four hours, and after just 30 minutes' training, any member of my team could manage it seamlessly," Béarel says.

Auto-Snapshot Manager helps administrators restore data quickly at the application level. This high level of automation has helped the IT team adapt quickly and smoothly to the important role now played by virtualized iSCSI storage. "The webcast that Dell presented at the beginning of the project convinced us that the Dell EqualLogic PS series would be simple to deploy and maintain – and experience has proved us right," says Béarel.

Virtualized storage increases flexibility and scalability

With virtualized iSCSI storage, the 10-strong IT team at EBP can respond much more effectively to fluctuations in demand. Béarel explains: "Rather than buying physical disks, which takes time, we simply allocate virtual pools of storage to servers as and when they need it. This helps us run SAP ERP smoothly and provide a consistent end-user experience."

Any of the four PowerEdge R900 servers can use this virtual storage, which avoids both the bottlenecks and low utilisation rates associated with direct-attached storage. "Now that our storage is centralised, we don't have to worry about under-utilisation and over-provisioning. And because it's virtualized, we can expand, reduce and reallocate on demand. With our Dell EqualLogic PS5000XV SAN, we can respond to the needs of the business quickly and cost effectively," says Béarel.

The modular design of the SAN also means that adding new arrays is easy. "Peer provisioning will help us install additional Dell EqualLogic PS5000XV arrays quickly and simply," says Béarel.

In future, EBP will install a second array in another building to create a disaster recovery site. "By storing snapshots on a second PS5000XV SAN, we'll be securing our data in the event of a fire or other disaster. It will also give us more time to back up data during the day," says Béarel. With PS series Auto-Replication, the team will be able to configure volumes for replication to the second SAN fast, without devoting valuable time to repetitive manual backup processes. In the event of an issue at the principal site, critical data will be restored in minutes.

> "By storing snapshots on a second PS5000XV SAN, we'll be securing our data in the event of a fire or other disaster. It will also give us more time to back up data during the day."

Jerome Béarel, Information Systems Director, EBP Informatique

Inclusive price minimises total cost of ownership

Like many IT managers, Béarel knows that hidden costs can lurk behind a seemingly reasonable price – not just in management overheads, but in additional software fees. "With Dell EqualLogic storage, we had one upfront price to pay. As a result, we were able to buy with a clear idea of the return on investment we'd achieve. We can add more arrays without paying for additional software licences, so it's simple and cost effective to expand on our initial purchase," Béarel says.

ProSupport for IT protects investment

If employees were unable to use SAP ERP, business continuity would soon be at risk. EBP chose Dell ProSupport for IT Mission Critical to reflect the fundamental role played by the Dell EqualLogic SAN. With this level of support, an engineer arrives on-site within four hours of any incident that's reported, ensuring uptime stays high.

The company also selected Fast-Track Dispatch, which provides IT staff with training on Dell products, helping them to diagnose issues and order parts from Dell without calling out technicians.

Béarel says: "Fast-Track Dispatch saves us a lot of time. It's a great way to use and develop the IT team's skills, sidestep routine troubleshooting and accelerate resolution times. This project has definitely reinforced our relationship with Dell. It's important to have a great price–performance ratio, but strategic advice and technical support are valuable too. With Dell, we have all three."

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