



Business challenge

Following its divestiture, Gala Leisure found that its inherited IT infrastructure was over-sized and required expensive external support. How could it cut costs and make better use of its resources?

Transformation

After splitting from its parent company, Gala Leisure found that its inherited IT systems were over-sized and required expensive third-party support. The company implemented an IBM storage solution—enabling standardized support, lowering costs by 52 percent and delivering a 57 percent increase in application performance.



Daniel Askin
Solutions Architect,
Gala Leisure IT

Business benefits

57%
boost
in application performance

52%
cut
in storage support and operational costs

98%
reduction
in required floor space

Gala Leisure Ltd.

Harnessing a fast, cost-effective storage solution

Gala Leisure Ltd. is the number one bingo operator in the United Kingdom, with 132 bingo clubs nationwide. The company was separated from its parent company in December 2015, and employs around 5,000 individuals.

“The IBM flash storage solution cuts the runtime of key processes—boosting application performance by 57 percent.”

—Daniel Askin, Solutions Architect, Gala Leisure IT

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New opportunities, new challenges

Bingo operator Gala Leisure split from its parent company in late 2015, with the companies dividing their previously shared IT infrastructure around two years earlier in readiness for the sale. However, the split left Gala Leisure with equipment that was poorly suited to its IT needs, as Daniel Askin, Solutions Architect at Gala Leisure IT, explains:

“It was an odd distribution because our parent company is significantly larger than Gala Leisure, so our requirements are completely different; however, the infrastructure sizing did not take this into consideration due to project constraints. The infrastructure that we inherited was far beyond the specifications we required—it did the job but it wasn’t ideally suited to our needs.

“What’s more, Gala Leisure’s head office is in Nottingham but the IT equipment is 140 miles away.

This distance combined with the over-specification meant that we had to outsource many of our IT support functions, which was expensive—we just didn’t have the necessary in-house skills post-split. Additionally, some of our equipment was reaching end-of-life and needed to be replaced.”

Deploying a flash storage solution

Gala Leisure decided to look for a new storage solution that would better meet its needs, enable it to cut costs and boost efficiency, and integrate with its existing equipment as much as possible.

“We didn’t want to sign up to any further third-party support as we wanted to reduce operational costs,” notes Daniel Askin. “We also aimed to reduce our total cost of ownership [TCO] on the data center footprint by cutting power and floor space requirements.



“We also needed a solution that would replace our IBM DS8300, which was reaching end-of-life, while integrating with our existing IBM XIV® and IBM Storwize® V7000 elements—these assets were still very adequate for our needs, so we wanted to make the best use of our investment in them.”

After considering solutions from a range of major vendors, Gala Leisure opted for a virtualized storage

solution combining IBM FlashSystem V9000 and IBM SAN Volume Controller built with IBM Spectrum Virtualize™ software. On the server side, the company chose to deploy VersaStack solutions jointly developed by IBM and Cisco. VersaStack combines the Cisco UCS Integrated Infrastructure with IBM Storwize to deliver extraordinary levels of performance and efficiency in an ultra-compact footprint.

“IBM FlashSystem V9000 integrated perfectly with our existing IBM storage devices, which no other vendor could offer,” comments Daniel Askin. “We hadn’t originally looked for a flash-based storage solution as we thought it would be out-of-budget, but IBM offered a very competitive package.”

The IBM flash solution provides ultra-fast, ultra-low-latency storage, while IBM SAN Volume Controller enhances storage flexibility and performance by providing sophisticated virtualization and management capabilities. Gala Leisure virtualized the capacity on its existing XIV and Storwize solutions, and now also manages these behind SAN Volume Controller as its single point of control. These storage technologies work alongside the integrated VersaStack environment to offer rapid deployment and execution of business applications.

“The deployment was very straightforward—the solution was up and running in less than a day,

and both IBM and Cisco offered excellent support,” adds Daniel Askin. “Although it’s very powerful, SAN Volume Controller is also very easy to use and everyone at Gala Leisure has picked it up in no time.”

Reaping the benefits

With its new IBM storage environment in place, Gala Leisure is already seeing a host of benefits, from enhanced performance and standardized support to lower costs.

“Even though it wasn’t a key requirement for us, the IBM FlashSystem solution boosts application performance by 57 percent and allows us to easily scale our storage both up and out,” says Daniel Askin. “We also have better visibility of storage status, performance, and capacity than ever before due to all storage being virtualized and abstracted behind SAN Volume Controller.



“Moreover, implementing VersaStack has reduced the number of fibre channel connections we need, and the remaining ones are now all

managed through Cisco switches—enabling us to simplify and standardize our infrastructure and IT support with a single point of contact at Cisco, and therefore reduce our costs.”

Gala Leisure has also cut costs by reducing its data center footprint, as Daniel Askin explains: “The old IBM DS8300 took up approximately eight racks of floor space, whereas the IBM FlashSystem V9000 fits in just 6U of rack space—so that we’re using 98 percent less space than before. Adopting FlashSystem means that we have also switched from spinning disks to solid-state drives,

cutting electricity and cooling requirements—leading to an overall saving of 52 percent.

“As well as being far more efficient and compact than the previous storage system, the dramatic reduction in floor space delivered by FlashSystem has given us the flexibility to move from our current data center hall, used solely by our parent company and Gala Leisure,

into a co-located site—this will enable us to cut operational costs even further.”

He concludes: “With the IBM storage solution in place, we now have higher storage performance combined with lower operational and support costs—empowering Gala Leisure to continue on its next phase with a solid IT foundation.”

Solution components

- IBM® FlashSystem® V9000
- IBM SAN Volume Controller built with IBM Spectrum Virtualize™
- IBM Storwize® V7000
- IBM XIV®
- VersaStack by Cisco and IBM

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