

CASE STUDY:

Reliable, future-proof storage for financial organisation

When financial services company Hampden needed to replace its existing storage area network, it turned to the company who had installed its current system for advice. IT integrator Fordway recommended a combination of flash and solid state storage to provide cost-effective, automated handling of current and historic data, plus the reliability that is vital in the financial services sector.

The organisation

[Hampden](#) is a privately-owned business which has been providing financial services since the 1970s. It began by providing administrative and claims services to the insurance industry and through a combination of strategic acquisition and product development has now become the largest provider of agency services to Members of the Lloyds insurance market. It is also a major investor in the private bank Hampden & Co. and in ArchOver, the UK's fastest growing peer-to-peer lending platform. Hampden has been included on the Sunday Times Profit Track and The Sunday Times International Track leagues.

The business need

Hampden had used a Series 40 Compellent (now Dell Compellent) storage area network (SAN) for a number of years. However, the storage was approaching end of life and the support agreement with Dell expired at the end of February 2018. So Hampden needed to find a new solution for its storage requirements.

The Compellent SAN had been installed by independent IT integrator Fordway in 2010, and Hampden's IT Manager Andrew Hough turned to them for advice on its replacement.

"When we decided to buy our previous SAN, Compellent told us that they only sold through partners and recommended Fordway," explained Andrew Hough, IT manager at Hampden. "We've been working with Fordway

ever since. If anything looks too technical, or is beyond the skills we have in-house, we outsource it to them."

As well as technical expertise, Fordway provides Hampden with a managed disaster recovery (DR) service and enhanced support. This meant its team had in-depth knowledge of how Hampden's infrastructure worked and the volumes of data handled.

Hampden and Fordway discussed various different storage options and suppliers, from large vendors to challenger brands. "However, we liked the SAN we had and knew it well," Andrew said. "We wanted a long-term solution and were concerned that some storage vendors might not maintain their quality over time, so we felt safer staying with Dell Compellent. Their products offered the right combination of ease of use, longevity and reliability – and because everything here is virtualised, reliability is vital."

The solution

One of Fordway's consultants carried out an audit and analysis of Hampden's storage needs to examine how the different options available from Dell Compellent would meet them. The two organisations concluded that the most appropriate solution would not be the direct upgrade for the existing SAN, the Dell SC9000, but the SC4020 all-in-one array.



"When we bought our original SAN, Compellent only offered a single model," Andrew explained. "Now there's a choice, and we agreed that the mid-range one would be the best fit for our needs. It also had lower maintenance costs than its bigger brother."

The SC4020 offers either all-flash or hybrid storage in a space-saving chassis. Hampden chose the hybrid option because much of the material the company holds is historic 'cold' data that is rarely accessed but needs to be maintained securely for regulatory purposes. Fordway added a small Tier 1 layer of SSD disks to boost performance for certain applications such as SQL Server.

"There was no point paying for rapid flash storage for our historic data," Andrew pointed out. "Even better, we don't have to do the tiering ourselves, as the SAN automatically tiers the data depending on how often it is accessed. Almost everything is automated with this SAN, which we really like."

Fordway installed new SANs at both Hampden's primary site in Gracechurch Street in London and the back-up site in High Wycombe, Buckinghamshire. The project included racking and eventual de-racking of the old controllers and ensuring that full fibre channel connectivity was put in place, which helps to reduce energy costs. Hampden's in-house IT team then completed the data migration.

The benefits

The new SANs provide Hampden with futureproof storage capacity, as well as a DR service managed by Fordway. Fordway carried out a successful test after the initial installation to ensure that Hampden can failover from primary to secondary SAN if required, and will continue to test DR capability every year, while Hampden can call on Fordway to implement or provide support for a live scenario as and when needed.

Andrew and his team are very happy with their new storage and DR. "The flash storage has significantly improved the speed of response, and alongside it we have cheaper storage for our historic data, so we now have the best of both worlds," he explained. "The system automatically alerts Dell CoPilot if there is any issues and they proactively deal with them and alert us. We also have enhanced support from Fordway and sometimes call them directly rather than going through Co-Pilot, depending on the situation that's arisen, because they know both the technology and our system.

"Fordway are very easy to work with – we get on with them very well, and we know that if something is beyond our expertise we can contact them and let them get on with it. We trust them implicitly, and with this new SAN as with the previous one, they've ensured we have a reliable, easy to use solution that provides exactly what we need."

*Andrew Hough, Group IT Manager,
Hampden Group*