Powering business with efficiency and capacity

ATMI uses Dell server, storage, networking and backup technologies to quickly meet business needs and provide capacity on demand.

Business need
ATMI needed to increase server and storage efficiency, meet business needs faster, and reduce operating costs.

Solution
The company deployed Dell PowerEdge servers, Dell Compellent storage, Dell Networking switches and Dell AppAssure backup software to gain efficiency, capacity and cost savings.

Benefits
- IT staff is more efficient and has simplified management and administration
- Servers are provisioned in days instead of months
- Can supply capacity on demand to meet growth needs
- Saves up to $250,000
- Exchange Server environment is backed up in one day rather than weeks

Solutions featured
- Backup & Recovery
- Networking
- Server
- Storage

“We can build and provision servers in just a few days, compared with up to three months previously, thanks to the efficiency the Dell solutions give us and the advantage of using one vendor — Dell — for everything.”

Preston Butler, Infrastructure Director, ATMI
For ATMI, business is all about efficiency. The company, which provides specialty materials and materials handling and delivery solutions for semiconductor, flat panel, and other manufacturers worldwide, is committed to promptly providing services that increase customers’ efficiencies. Delivering on that promise means the ATMI IT department must be efficient, too, so it can help ATMI find the best way of getting solutions to customers on time.

But in recent years, as the firm’s business quickly grew, IT struggled to meet the capacity demands of the business. “We often needed to add capacity on our two EMC storage arrays, which was a very arduous process because we had run out of space and had to redesign the structure of the logical unit number to make it work,” says Brian Horos, service delivery manager for ATMI. “And our arrays were cache-saturated. Ultimately, we ended up spending thousands of dollars to add more disk space just to increase performance. There was no easy or cost-effective upgrade path for our storage needs.”

The IT department also wanted to find a faster way to build and provision servers to meet internal demands. “An internal team would come to us with a project, such as deploying servers to support a new Microsoft SQL Server installation,” says Preston Butler, the infrastructure director at ATMI. “By the time we got approval to buy servers, bought the servers, and got them delivered and installed, three months had gone by. It wasn’t nearly fast enough for the urgent demands of the business.”

Also, IT needed to reduce system backup times. “We’d always been tape-driven in terms of backing up everything,” Horos says. “We had an engineer who spent 90 percent of his time doing tape rotation, labeling the tape and taking it off-site. Along with that, we spent too much time backing up our Exchange Server email environment. The entire process wasn’t efficient.” In addition, ATMI had another challenge — what to do with its aging Cisco networking infrastructure. “The networking switches we had were at the end of their life and weren’t going to be supported anymore. To upgrade was going to cost a lot of money,” says Butler.

To simplify storage, increase efficiency, cut costs, and better meet the rapidly growing needs of the business, ATMI knew it needed to find new technologies.

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Brian Horos, Service Delivery Manager, ATMI

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ATMI deploys Dell servers, SANs, networking switches and tapeless backup solution

For many years, ATMI had used Dell PCs, along with Dell servers, throughout the organization. “We had good experiences with the technology, and we also had a great relationship with Dell sales reps and engineers,” says Butler. “When we looked at storage and networking solutions, we did our due diligence, but we came back to Dell because we liked the products and the price.” Additionally, ATMI was interested in finding a single vendor to handle all its infrastructure needs. “We were looking for one vendor, and we were already going down a path that was all Dell,” says Butler.

With these factors in mind, ATMI began implementing Dell server, storage, and networking solutions, starting with Dell PowerEdge R620 and R820 rack servers. Following the server deployment, ATMI implemented Dell Networking S4810 switches in its data center and deployed several Dell Compellent storage area networks (SANs). The organization also started using Dell AppAssure software for tapeless backup of its database and Exchange Server environments. To support a recently installed Microsoft Lync unified communications platform, ATMI also installed Dell Networking switches at remote sites. In addition, the company deployed Dell SecureWorks software for log, firewall and critical server monitoring.

ATMI is also using a similar smaller solution for disaster recovery, which it can quickly activate if necessary.

ATMI relied on Dell Deployment Services for all of these technology deployments. “Dell Deployment Services was great,” says Horos. “They had Dell engineers on-site to work through any issues with us, and we were able to move forward very quickly on each project.”

Increased IT efficiency, simplified management and administration

ATMI has simplified IT management and administration with its Dell environment. “We are definitely more efficient in IT with the Dell server, storage and networking solutions we have in place,” Horos says. “We have more fluid cache and a tiered storage approach, and we don’t need to manage data performance or where to place data, because that’s automatically handled with our Dell technologies. We also have tapeless backup with Dell AppAssure, so we have really gained efficiencies across the board.”

Faster delivery of solutions to internal customers

By operating more efficiently, ATMI is able to deliver technology to its internal customers much faster than before. “We can build and provision servers in just a few days, compared with up to three months previously, thanks to the efficiency the Dell solutions give us and the advantage of using one vendor — Dell — for everything,” says Butler. “Because of that, we’ve increased the productivity of the business as well.”

As an example, the ATMI IT department needed to help an internal business unit quickly deploy a new software solution for temperature control and monitoring at a customer site. “The business unit thought it would take a long time, but we were able to set up separate staging and development environments within three days because we had a private cloud already in place here,” says Horos. “We wouldn’t have been able to provide that without Dell servers, storage and networking on the back end.”

Flexibility to meet demands for storage capacity

Now, IT has the flexibility it needs to add more storage and compute capacity on demand. “If I need to add memory and CPU, I just go out and buy a Dell blade and it gets here in a few weeks,” says Horos. “When it’s delivered, I plug it into the blade chassis, configure it, and I have 16 CPUs and 256 gigabytes of RAM instantly. To add storage, I simply need to buy a few trays — which
are very cost-effective — power them on, set them up and that’s it. The Dell Compellent solution does all the tiering and restructuring in the background. It couldn’t be easier. And with the Dell Networking switches, we’re not running around recabling things anymore. From a growth perspective, we could add three more blades without making any major changes to the back-end environment."

As a result, the company’s IT staff can easily supply capacity on demand with the Dell solutions it has implemented. “We can meet and exceed our customers’ demands for capacity based on the Dell server, storage and networking technologies we have deployed here,” says Butler.

Saves hundreds of thousands of dollars
ATMI saves hundreds of thousands of dollars, because it no longer has to upgrade or replace the expensive SANs previously in place. “We save up to $250,000 by not having to upgrade to new arrays every few years when we need more capacity,” says Horos. “With the Dell Compellent solution, I can upgrade the controllers and I get to keep the same disk. Then I can tier the disk out, repurpose it, and simply put a different disk pool in the array.”

Similarly, the company saves money by using Dell Networking switches. “We were looking at buying several massive switches that would have cost us a few hundred thousand,” says Horos. “With the Dell Networking switches, we avoided that cost. And we also get a redundant fiber back end for our storage environment and another set of switches for basic data center connectivity. We get more core density, capacity and growth capabilities with the Dell Networking solution.”

Backups in one day instead of weeks
The organization also has state-of-the-art data protection software with Dell AppAssure to go along with its new storage and switch technologies. As a result, the organization can now back up its critical Exchange Server email system in much quicker than before. “We can back up and replicate our entire Exchange Server environment once a day, including archives and active mail, with the Dell AppAssure solution,” says Horos. “That would have taken weeks to do with our previous environment.”

Because ATMI administrators no longer spend time on backups, they can focus on other important projects. “We avoided the need to hire two people to work on backups because of the work Dell AppAssure does for us,” says Horos. “In general, the efficiencies we’ve seen in IT have enabled us to focus more on strategic projects, like deploying our Microsoft Lync platform. We didn’t have the resources internally to do that before.”

As ATMI continues to work on finding efficient new ways to support the business, it plans to turn to Dell. “For anything we need, we’ll go to Dell and see if it has a solution for us,” says Butler. “Our philosophy now is Dell first.”

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Preston Butler, Infrastructure Director, ATMI

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