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## Overview

### Business Challenge

Hallmark Cards needed to store a significant increase in crucial point-of-sale data being sent in each day by major retailers for the business to investigate and analyse. It was also important to improve the productivity of the IT support team and reduce operating costs.

### Solution

Working closely with IBM Partner\* Advent One, Hallmark replaced its existing data centre infrastructure with an IBM virtualised storage solution. Using VMware and SAN-based storage, data was migrated seamlessly from over a dozen physical servers onto virtual machines hosted by three IBM System x®3650 servers.

### Business benefits

- Smarter, more timely business decisions using daily retailer point-of-sale data
  - IT staff work more productively and efficiently
  - Reduced operational costs
  - Smaller physical infrastructure footprint
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## Smarter consumer insight on the cards with IBM®

Founded in the United States a century ago, greeting-card giant Hallmark Cards has sold its cards in Australia under licence since the mid-1950s. In 1979, Hallmark's Australian operations became a subsidiary of Hallmark Cards and wholly owned by the parent in 1979.

### Supporting smarter decision-making

Hallmark was receiving ever-increasing volumes of point-of-sale data from major retailers each day. At the same time, the company was introducing a new barcode system based on each individual item, referred to as a stock-keeping unit (SKU), rather than categories, which was also providing the company with greater volumes of detailed retail information.

“We needed to work out how to store the greater volumes of point-of-sale information received daily from major retailers, which would enable us to look at ways of improving how we do business,” says Allan Grover, Asia-Pacific IT Services Manager, Hallmark Cards. “Our storage requirements were starting to blow out, which was putting enormous pressure on our existing infrastructure.”

The company was also looking to boost the productivity of its small IT department and reduce some of its operational costs. “We had a program of reducing staff numbers through natural attrition,” says Grover. “When an IT network and systems administrator left, we had to find ways of doing more with the resources we had. So it was a high priority that storage could introduce new efficiencies to the business.”

Hallmark sought advice from its British counterpart and Advent One and reviewed four options, which included a like-for-like replacement of its server environment as well as virtualisation.



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## Solution Components

### Hardware

- IBM System x3650 M2 Rack Servers
- IBM System Storage™ DS®3400 FC Dual Controller
- IBM System Storage EXP3000 SAS DDM, IBM System Storage EXP3000 SATA DDM
- IBM System Storage SAN24B-4 Express® switch

### Software

- VMware Enterprise Plus Acceleration Kit

### Services

- Advent One
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Hallmark had already successfully collaborated with Advent One, a respected IBM Business Partner, on a separate project which involved a system upgrade to the IBM POWER®6 system platform, which Hallmark used to run enterprise resource planning software.

“In reviewing the four options with Advent One, we emphasised the importance of price and a solution that was straightforward and efficient,” says Grover. “We’d worked successfully with them before, so we were confident they could design and implement a new storage system that met our needs.”

With Advent One’s input, Hallmark settled on a virtual server platform using SAN storage, incorporating three IBM System x®3650 series servers, running VMware Enterprise Plus Acceleration Kit, as well as an IBM System Storage DS®3400 Dual Controller, IBM System Storage EXP3000 SAS, IBM System Storage EXP3000 SATA and IBM System Storage SAN24B-4 Express.

“Advent One’s high degree of professionalism and expertise gave me enormous confidence that a SAN-based virtualised solution using IBM server and storage technology was the correct way to go.”

In early 2010, Hallmark and Advent One moved the company’s servers and systems from its existing infrastructure onto the new IBM platform. “With Advent One on board, the migration of data from the old infrastructure onto the new system went off without a hitch,” explains Grover.

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## Taking advantage of new consumer insights

Hallmark's new virtualised storage environment is designed to more easily accommodate the daily surge of retail sales information flowing into the system. "By being able to store this information, we can now see what items are selling in what quantities and which stores each day," says Grover.

"That gives the company enormous insight into the business as well as how our consumers shop and what they like to buy. As we crunch that data and break it down, we'll be able to make smarter decisions in getting to our customers and take advantage of opportunities as they arise."

While the point-of-sale data is providing Hallmark with business insight into its everyday card range, Grover points out that it will also validate sales information on its seasonal card range, which its mobile sales team has been collecting and relaying into the system for the past 15 years.

"The new retail data will substantiate the decisions we've made in the past based on our seasonal card orders and returns," he says.

The reliability and sophistication of the IBM storage solution has helped Hallmark to manage its infrastructure with its existing IT staff. "It has enabled us to be both more productive and efficient with our existing resources," Grover says.

Hallmark has also seen further operational efficiencies through the combined efforts of IBM's server processing technology and SAS storage drives, which have resulted in faster weekly database rebuilds.

"The system is very, very fast," he says. "Already we've cut the processing time taken to rebuild our Microsoft SQL Server databases and business intelligence cubes from 13 hours to eight. That's significant."

## Charting to reduce cost with a dynamic infrastructure

Hallmark is also looking to save on costs through less power use and cooling. "When you move from 13 heat sources in a physical environment to three or four in a virtualised set-up, that's going to impact on your operational costs," says Grover.

"If we move to new premises, coupled with the benefit of our new server environment, POWER6 installation and upcoming VoIP solution that will be used across the business, we anticipate we'll require only half the area our computer room takes up now."

In addition, the virtualised storage solution can be more easily expanded with lower costs. "If we need another server, we can have it up and running in hours, without any further hardware cost," says Grover.

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— Allan Grover, Asia-Pacific IT Services Manager, Hallmark Cards

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## For more information

To learn more about IBM visit [ibm.com/storage/au/](http://ibm.com/storage/au/), or to contact your local IBM sales representative phone **1800 557 343** Australia and **0800 426 431** New Zealand.

To learn more about Advent One, visit [www.adventone.com](http://www.adventone.com) or phone 03 9626 5900.



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ABN 79 000 024 733

IBM Australia  
55 Coonara Avenue  
West Pennant Hills  
NSW Australia 2125

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