CASESTUDY

VALLEY PROTEINS

GEO
North America

INDUSTRY
Recovery/recycling

COMPANY
Valley Proteins
www.valleyproteins.com

USE CASE
— Database
— ERP

BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION
Valley Proteins improved performance for its business-critical SAP environment by deploying a FlashStack converged infrastructure from Cisco and Pure Storage. The results: SAP performance approaching that of in-memory databases, a faster financial close, more agile business decision-making, and more efficient use of data center and employee resources.

CHALLENGES
— Fast-growing SAP environment demanded higher performing infrastructure.

— Legacy systems were expensive to maintain, requiring forklift upgrades every 3 years.
— Engineers spent significant time rebalancing workloads to optimize performance.

IT TRANSFORMATION
— Migration to FlashStack took less than 3 days.
— Performance dramatically improved for SAP and other applications.
— IT can now be more strategic, helping the business grow market share.

VALLEY PROTEINS IMPROVES ITS PERFORMANCE WITH A FLASHSTACK CONVERGED INFRASTRUCTURE FROM CISCO AND PURE STORAGE

The recovery and recycling of food service waste and animal byproducts is a fast-moving, highly regulated industry. Raw materials—which are turned into high-protein feed ingredients or biofuel—must be collected, transported, and processed as quickly as possible to maximize profitability.

Valley Proteins, a Winchester, Virginia-based rendering company, transports hundreds of millions of gallons of used cooking oil and other byproducts every year, enabling the materials to be reused instead of ending up in landfills. The company uses SAP as the cornerstone of its business. It tracks materials, inventory, and vehicle location and maintenance in real time to make the most efficient use of its 40 processing and transfer facilities and private trucking fleet. The company depends on SAP for a holistic view of customer profitability, supplier pricing, and individual factory performance, helping to guide and expedite business decision making.

For years, Valley Proteins has standardized on Cisco Unified Computing System™ (Cisco UCS®) servers, networking, and security solutions for its entire data center and disaster recovery (DR) environments for a reliable, scalable, and highly secure infrastructure. "Cisco gives us modular scalability and an industry-standard architecture that's easy to manage," says Brad Wilton, director of IT. "We have lots of room to grow and add more protection and analytics."

However, as Valley Proteins pursued an aggressive growth strategy through acquisitions, it became clear that storage was becoming a bottleneck to consistent performance for SAP applications. The company's legacy storage arrays were 3 years old, and they were already becoming overloaded.

"We had engineers who were completely dedicated to balancing and rebalancing workloads to optimize storage I/O," Wilton says. "It got to the point where our storage required so much hands-

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BRAD WILTON
Director of IT, Valley Proteins

on maintenance that it was difficult for engineers to get out to our remote sites and solve business problems."

FLASHSTACK: A BETTER FOUNDATION FOR GROWTH

Instead of going through another forklift storage upgrade and paying for a lengthy professional services engagement, Valley Proteins began looking at all-flash storage solutions. It wanted enterprise storage as well as a converged infrastructure (CI) that would be easy to deploy, maintain, and scale as the business grew.

"Flash storage is becoming the new enterprise standard, so we started looking at Pure Storage FlashArrays as part of a FlashStack CI solution," Wilton says. "We visited another Pure customer's data center, and we were impressed with what we saw. So we decided to do a bake-off between Pure and our existing SAN."

A Valley Proteins engineer was able to set up the Pure arrays with Cisco UCS and stand up test applications in just a few hours. When tests returned favorable results, the engineer cautiously moved some production workloads over to Pure. "We were delighted with the performance gains that we saw," says Wilton. "With Cisco UCS and all-flash storage behind SAP, we can return results at nearly the speed of an in-memory database."

Valley Proteins decided to deploy FlashStack, which combined new Pure Storage FlashArrays with its existing Cisco UCS servers and VMware software into a single, integrated architecture. A fully tested and validated reference architecture for SAP on FlashStack helps ensure rapid deployment, with no storage tier planning or tuning required. Highly efficient components reduce power, cooling, and data center costs.

"With no professional services assistance, our engineer was able to move our entire 60 TB production environment to

FlashStack in less than three days, with zero downtime to the business," says Wilton. "The efficiencies gained were incredible. We were running faster and simpler. When I got back, I saw that two entire racks in our data center had been compressed down to just a few Us. It was like night and day."

EFFORTLESSLY IMPROVING BUSINESS CONTINUITY

Using FlashRecover replication, a feature of the FlashArray, Valley Proteins was able to retire its legacy replication appliances, freeing up space in its data center. Replication is faster with FlashRecover, with full system copies of SAP to improve data protection and business continuity. "The data synch between our production data center and DR site happens faster with FlashStack than our legacy arrays were able to replicate sitting next to each other in the same data center," says Wilton. "FlashRecover was very easy to set up. We were replicating between data centers in just a

couple of hours." FlashRecover comes at no additional cost, helping Valley Proteins contain expenses.

With a simplified, streamlined infrastructure, Valley Proteins is enabling its IT staff to be more effective. "I can describe FlashStack with one word: simple," says Wilton. "Now that we don't have to invest time, money, and people into daily infrastructure management, IT can be much more strategic and aligned with the business. We can send our engineers out to remote sites, where they can make a real difference to the business, with the confidence that our data center will continue to run just fine. We can also give engineers a better work/life balance."

Business users can access SAP and other crucial data faster, enabling them to make informed business decisions.

The company's monthly financial close is accelerated by days, and reports that used to take hours are now complete in minutes. "We're helping the business make better decisions to be more profitable," says Wilton. "We're enabling more strategic conversations."

BOOSTING PERFORMANCE OF CRITICAL APPLICATIONS

Even enterprise resource planning (ERP) upgrades are faster with FlashStack, requiring only a day to complete a full refresh—a time savings of 90 percent. "We no longer need 10 days to set up a QA environment and a week of

consulting time just to do a refresh of SAP," says Wilton. "It's easy to use FlashRecover to make a copy of our production environment and get right down to testing."

As Valley Proteins continues to grow through acquisitions, it can onboard them quickly and easily scale all of its infrastructure components extremely efficiently. "FlashStack puts us in an elegant position to bring acquisitions into our SAP environment from day one," says Wilton. "Engineers can comfortably set up new locations and have confidence that they won't run into problems."

By moving to an evergreen CI solution, Valley Proteins is no longer dependent on professional services or bound by 3-year hardware refresh cycles. As the company moves to SAP HANA for real-time analytics, it will use FlashStack to enable rapid deployment and reduce the total cost of ownership.

"FlashStack gives us the ability to plan for the next five to seven years, which fundamentally changes our ability to pivot and grow," says Wilton. "It's an incredible value proposition. By helping us be more efficient with our logistics, FlashStack directly contributes to our bottom line."

PRODUCTS AND SERVICES

Unified Computing FlashStack Converged Infrastructure:

— *Cisco UCS 5100 Series Blade Server Chassis*

— *Cisco UCS B-Series Blade Servers*

— *Cisco UCS Manager*

— *Pure Storage FlashStack*

— *VMware vSphere Cloud and Systems Management*

Networking and security solutions:

— *Cisco Catalyst® and Cisco Nexus® Switches*

— *Cisco ASA 5500-X Series Firewalls*

— *Cisco ASR Aggregation Services Routers*

— *Cisco Integrated Services Routers*

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