

Able Body Labor gets Positioned for Future Growth through Storage Virtualization



Champion and IBM Solution Improves Flexibility and Scalability to Enable Competitive Advantages and Continued Business Success

Highlights:

INDUSTRY

Staffing Services

CHALLENGE

Faced with continued growth in their business, Able Body's storage needs began to exceed capacity. Their goal was to develop a storage infrastructure strategy that meets both short- and long-term needs.

SOLUTION

Deploying a storage virtualization solution as an enabler for future growth. Solution components:

- IBM System Storage™ DS4700
- IBM SAN Volume Controller (SVC)

RESULTS

By optimizing their storage environment, Able Body has recognized the following key business results:

- Increased storage capacity to accommodate business growth
- Enabled competitive advantages by being able to take on new projects
- Streamlined storage management and maintenance efficiencies
 - Able to perform maintenance in real time without any downtime for end-users
- Improved disk performance
- Enabled new levels of storage flexibility and scalability

The Able Body family of companies is one of the fastest growing staffing organizations in the U.S. With storefronts that include Able Body Labor, Preferable Staffing, Infinity Staffing and others, the company has grown to include 170 locations across 24 states and almost 900 full-time employees. Based in Clearwater, FL, Able Body uses a "daily pay" business model to provide skilled and unskilled labor for a wide variety of industries.

The company's IT organization has worked hard to leverage new technologies that help the IT infrastructure keep pace with rapid growth. The organization implemented a server virtualization solution with VMware ESX Server on IBM System x™ hardware a few years ago, followed by a consolidation of storage on IBM System Storage DS4300 disk system with an IBM System Storage EXP810 storage expansion unit.

Growing Pains

As the company continued to grow, however, its storage needs began to exceed capacity. "We reached a point where we couldn't back up everything that we wanted," explains William Stillwell, Able Body systems architect. "We also had some new storage projects that were going to require a lot more disk space than we had on hand."

Company CIO Paul Zimorski said his first instinct was to add more disk at the primary data center, as well as at the company's backup site in Tampa.

But when plans to build out a third data center in Nevada began to take shape, Zimorski decided it was time to evaluate the company's long-term storage strategy. He called in IBM Premier Business Partner, Champion Solutions Group, to help identify and evaluate potential options—with an eye to leveraging the company's existing storage investments.

Storage Virtualization

Based upon Champion's time-tested methodology and breadth of experience designing and implementing solutions for unique IT environments, Champion recommended a storage optimization solution through virtualization. Able Body deployed IBM System Storage DS4700 to expand the capacity of the storage area network (SAN), then virtualized the storage infrastructure with IBM Systems Storage SAN Volume Controller (SVC).

"We could have gotten by with just adding disk," says Zimorski, "But from an infrastructure standpoint, that wasn't the direction we wanted to go. We didn't want to be doing this again in six months."

A milestone implementation

Zimorski gives credit to Champion Solutions Group for a smooth implementation of the storage virtualization solution. "They've been great to work with," he says. "They took the time to understand our business, and they were with us every step of the way."

"We needed to get organized on the backend so that we could offer competitive advantages for the business. Champion Solutions Group took the time to understand our business, and they were with us every step of the way."

*Paul Zimorski - CIO
Able Body Labor*



In the process, Able Body helped IBM achieve a milestone by taking delivery of IBM's 10,000th SVC engine—as one of over 3,400 SVC installations worldwide.

Dramatic Improvements

In addition to expanding storage capacity, Able Body has realized numerous benefits from the IBM solution. “We’ve seen a dramatic improvement in disk performance,” Zimorski reports. “We’re also leveraging IBM TotalStorage® Productivity Center, which has made management easier. With TPC, I just go to one console and I’m able to see disk utilization and take corrective action right then.”

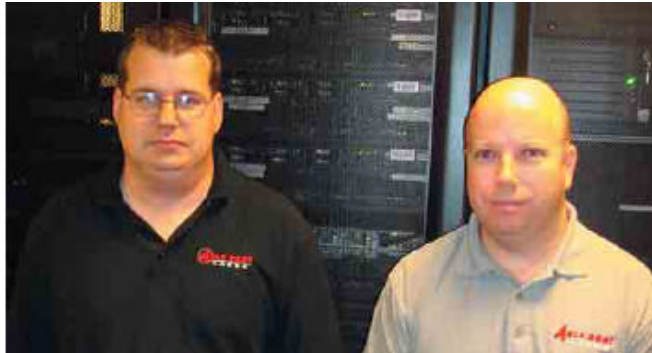
“One of the biggest benefits is to be able to perform maintenance in real time without any downtime from the end-user perspective,” adds Stillwell. “With the SVC, we can do all the maintenance we need to do during normal business hours. It has allowed us to virtualize the disk array the way VMware allowed us to virtualize our servers.”

Zimorski says that the IBM storage solution gives Able Body the flexibility and scalability to accommodate future growth—and helps position the company for continued success. “We needed to get organized on the backend so we could enable competitive advantages for the business,” he concludes. “The IBM storage solution has allowed us to do that.”

For more information

Visit www.championsg.com to view this story and to learn more about our capabilities.

For more information about Able Body Labor, visit www.ablebody.com.



*William Stillwell, Systems Architect and Paul Zimorski, CIO
Able Body Labor*

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