



Q ASSOCIATES

AVON

## Avon Comes Calling for Data Consolidation and Recovery



### COMMERCIAL

### KEY HIGHLIGHTS

#### Industry

Cosmetics and beauty products

#### The Challenge

Avon needed to consolidate IT infrastructures and business services across EMEA to a unified UK datacentre.

#### The Solution

NetApp/Cisco Flexpod for VMware  
Q Active Support

#### Benefits

- High performance ◀
- Easy to scale ◀
- Easy to manage ◀
- Cost effective ◀

Q Associates helps Avon implement a robust data repository platform, delivering improved performance, scalability and near-instant backup and recovery – plus the agility to seamlessly extend to the cloud.

### CUSTOMER PROFILE

Founded in 1886, today Avon is one of the world's largest direct sellers of cosmetics and other beauty products.

Marketing to women in more than 70 countries through nearly 6 million active independent Avon Sales Representatives, the iconic beauty company is investing in digital platforms and channels to extend its face-to-face social selling capabilities and boost its engagement with representatives and consumers alike.

Data is the lifeblood of any organisation and Avon is no exception. From product development and manufacturing through to its marketing, sales and worldwide distribution operations, efficient data sharing and seamless access to information is central to Avon's success.

So, when the EMEA IT team embarked on a transformation programme to consolidate IT infrastructures and business services across the EMEA region into a unified UK-based DC environment, it needed to be sure it had the right data storage and data management architecture in place to handle current and future demands.

## The challenge

The scale and scope of the project presented some significant data-related challenges. Getting primary capacity planning and data migration right was just the start. Other considerations for the project team included everything from keeping ongoing data storage and management costs under control to handling back-up and recovery effectively and ensuring future cloud models could be integrated with ease.

“We had storage and server arrays in 35 server rooms across the region – from Russia to South Africa – much of which was end of life. And while we had virtualised much of our environment, we needed a cutting-edge converged infrastructure that was fully equipped to cope with an evolving IT landscape,” explains Ian Mawdsley, Senior Manager, Infrastructure Solutions Architecture Team, Avon EMEA.

The first task was to consolidate infrastructure and data located in disparate locations across EMEA, initiating a new scalable platform built to deliver maximum uptime with minimal risk.

To reduce operational costs and optimise service delivery the new solution had to be easy to support and manage on a day-to-day basis, yet flexible enough to cope with a constantly shifting technology landscape. That included having the agility to extend workloads to private, public and hybrid cloud environments to support specific future needs.

But that wasn't all. Enhanced disaster recovery (DR) and data protection capabilities were also a top

priority. The jump in consolidated data volumes meant the new data centre would need to deliver significantly faster backup speeds in a much smaller window. Similarly, 'scale as you grow' capabilities, plus bullet-proof data restore functionality to guard against potential failures, were also vital.

“The first focus was compute and networking, but storage represented the next imperative, so we needed to be certain we had the right multiprotocol storage platform in place to meet current and future business demands,” continues Ian.

## The solution

A conversation with Q Associates provided Ian with the light-bulb moment he'd been looking for.

“From the get go it was clear that Q Associates had a deep knowledge and understanding of the FlexPod modular architecture and significant expertise and know-how related to NetApp's storage vision. We were able to bounce off ideas, sanity check concepts and discuss approaches to a variety of our data-related challenges – they even took us through how using VMware could prove the key to simplifying our virtualisation journey to the cloud,” says Ian.

Working together, Q Associates helped Avon with the specification of an all-encompassing converged infrastructure for its new state-of-the-art data centre. Designed around NetApp FlexPod for VMware, Data Fabric and next-generation datacentre technologies, the solution combines multiple agile NetApp technologies to address multiple strategic data issues and business requirements.

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*Ian Mawdsley, Senior Manager, Infrastructure Solutions Architecture Team, Avon EMEA.*

## The solution - continued

The implementation ran smoothly, and all data was successfully replicated and migrated to the new consolidated UK data centre.

“Q Associates handled many of the preliminary discussions with Cisco, NetApp and VMware and managed the installation process. Always willing to help, they also provided recommendations on options and technologies to consider on the networking side of things – going well beyond their brief to ensure we created an environment designed for efficiency, agility and cost effectiveness,” explains Ian.

This attention to detail included liaising closely with Avon’s infrastructure support partner to ensure everything ran smoothly up to and post implementation.

Q Associates also mapped out the requirements for a separate DR site to protect virtual machines, data and applications. Built using NetApp SnapMirror, AltaVault and StorageGrid Webscale, the advanced DR solution features high-speed data replication, backup and archiving capabilities across the Avon business.

“True professionals, Q Associates even provided detailed documentation on the DR infrastructure environment, so that everyone with DR responsibilities – including our support partner – has access to everything they need to coordinate activities. In my experience it’s rare to get this level of input from a provider,” continues Ian.

## The results

The implementation of NetApp technologies has transformed Avon’s ability to usher in future innovations and services, support its evolving business landscape and re-define the delivery of global digital services.

Integrating storage, network, compute and virtualisation, the FlexPod infrastructure is fully scalable and allows for seamless movement of data between controllers. The increased storage efficiencies inherent in the NetApp FAS systems has also enabled a reduction in datacentre footprint, power and cooling costs.

The deployment of FlexPod has also streamlined Avon’s support model, thanks to the co-operative support partnership between NetApp, Cisco, VMware and other technology partners. Q Associates undertakes continuous active monitoring of the entire environment, ensuring performance and capacity requirements keep pace with Avon’s evolving business needs.

To ensure everything runs smoothly, Q Associates takes care of proactively protecting Avon’s NetApp infrastructure.

“The Q Active Support for NetApp service gives us the peace of mind. We know they are monitoring all our critical NetApp systems, plus the service goes beyond the typical vendor break-fix and update support. For example, Q Associates handle all system configuration changes and incidents, manage capacity and performance utilisation and optimisation, and we have a hotline to their Service Desk engineers for any issues or queries,” confirms Ian.

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***“We now have an infrastructure in place that’s designed to handle the data-intensive scale-out workloads that are critical to digital transformation.”***

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## **The results - continued**

Reviewing how the business is now equipped to handle future business challenges with confidence, Ian outlines the pivotal achievements to date.

“We’ve replaced our previous rigid infrastructure with a hugely flexible platform that has reduced operational data centre overheads, optimised service delivery and gives us automated centralised day-to-day management across the entire solution,” comments Ian.

With Q Associates help, Avon has been able to make the move to a more innovative backup solution that de-duplicates and encrypts data before sending it to a cloud store for long term retention, with recent objects being retained on a NetApp AltaVault appliance to ensure hyper-fast restores

For the future, Avon is extending the scope of its consolidated UK-based data centre infrastructure to host new Web Based services to its Representatives and customers.

“We now have an infrastructure in place that’s designed to handle the data-intensive scale-out workloads that are critical to digital transformation.

Our new platform can support enterprise and emerging architectures with precise storage capacity and performance that can be tailored to our precise needs. With Q Associates help, we’ve created a strong and predictable foundation for the business moving forward,” concludes Ian.

AVON

## **Find out more**

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