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Jean-Paul Dries, Manager of Information Technology, Alro Group

Business Profile

Company Name:
Alro Group

Headquarters:
The Limburg province of Belgium

Industry:
Manufacturing—surface treatment
technology for autos and trucks

Revenue:
Over € 100million

Employees:
Over 800

- Business Environment:
- Four massive production facilities
 - Distinguished client list includes Volvo, Scania, Daf, Audi, and Caterpillar
 - EDI systems support JIT, and connect customers and supply chain partners
 - RF systems are used to manage inventory
 - Founded in 1976

Implementation Team:
System technicians from Alro Group
Vision Solutions technical support

Vision Solutions Products:
Data Manager

Critical Issue

Two years ago, Alro Group outgrew their IBM iSeries model 270, so they replaced it with a new, dual processor System i model 520 with a hefty 700 gigabytes of DASD. Surprisingly, in a short period of time data-creep pushed disk utilization on the new system to 60 percent. Only 30 percent of this data was useful in a production setting.

Alro Group's first backup on the new server was initially written to disk and then to tape. Because of this, disk utilization suddenly spiked to 90 percent.

Results

- In two weeks, Data Manager reduced disk usage down to 50 percent.
- Long-term average disk saturation now hovers around 40 to 42 percent.
- Disk capacity is now easily managed with backups.
- Data Manager proactively maintains ideal DASD utilization levels.

Technologies

Data Manager™ from Vision Solutions
IBM® System i™ model 520 with 700 gigabytes of DASD
Movex™ supply chain management software from Lawson
Internally developed RF and EDI applications

Business Challenge

Business growth strained Alro Group's IBM iSeries model 270, so they replaced it with a new, dual processor System i model 520 with 700 gigabytes of DASD. In a short time disk growth ran disk utilization up to 60 percent. Following some analysis, technicians realized that only about a third of this data was relevant. When technicians performed their first backup on the new system they, copied to disk and then to tape which forced disk utilization to climb to 90 percent.

"The system shuts down once you reach 95 percent," says Jean-Paul Dries, Alro Group's manager of Information Technology. "The first thing we did was manually delete files that were not important to the system." Dries quips, "Since we always do our backups at night and because we wanted to sleep peacefully and not be awakened by people unable to work, we had to resolve the problem."



Solution

Lawson, the provider of Alro Group's supply chain management system, Movex also offers a solution for DASD management from top IBM System i High Availability vendor, Vision Solutions.

Data Manager offers advanced data archiving capabilities, as well as modeling, testing, purging and archiving features. Data Manager allows System i shops to control and manage data growth, improve response time, and avoid costly disk and processor upgrades. With Data Manager, all of these maintenance activities can be performed while users remain online.

Dries licensed Data Manager almost immediately after seeing it, and in just a couple of weeks he managed to shrink disk usage down to 50 percent. Alro Group's System i 520 is now running at 40 to 42 percent disk saturation, a level easily maintained even with backups.

Dries explains that Movex itself is not generating much excess data, but that internally developed EDI and RF systems create huge files that serve no immediate production-related need. "With Data Manager it's very easy to find this data and delete it or store it in the event it's needed again. In most cases, it's just data that's not used anymore and is needlessly taking up storage space."

Some problems are hard to fix and others are resolved with relative ease. Says Dries, "We fixed our disk capacity problem and the installation of Data Manager was easy. Over time we have not needed much support because our environment is very stable. Once it is set up it you really don't have to maintain it. I'm very pleased with the product—we got much more than I expected."



17911 Von Karman Avenue, Suite 500, Irvine, CA 92614
1-800-957-4511 ▪ 1-801-799-0300 ▪ visionsolutions.com



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