

A man in a blue shirt is working on a server rack in a data center. The rack is filled with various server units and cables. The man is looking at the equipment and has his hand on one of the units. The background shows other server racks and a white door with a red label.

SIA MDS9000: storage accelerates (and services become unbeatable)

Italian banks' technology partner chooses cisco to keep high the level of provided services.

Executive Summary

Customer Name

SIA

Industry

Information Technology
in the banking sector.

Challenge

Rationalize IT systems to respond to the growing demand for storage and disaster recovery services and reduce the high management costs of previous infrastructures.

Solution

Cisco MDS 9000 product family providing high availability, advanced security and unified management by leveraging intelligent network features.

Business Value

The adoption of interoperable modules enables SIA to introduce new devices on the network without changing the existing infrastructure. Additionally, the dedicated modules provide remote access to features, enabling groups located at great distances to work together.

SIA, a technology view of banking.

The growing technology requirements of the financial world have driven the evolution of storage solutions to the highest levels of reliability and availability while ensuring security and speed to disaster recovery features. Managing large data volumes, backing up operations in real time, also in case of downtime causing events, a system capable of rapidly re-enabling services: this is a brief list of examples illustrating the options available to financial institutions to ensure highly competitive and accurate services by leveraging the potential of leading edge technologies. Such opportunities are at the core of SIA's (Società Interbancaria per l'Automazione) offering, a firm that has been operating in the financial sector for over 30 years and is positioned as a high profile technology partner.

Founded in Milan in 1977 from a group of shareholders consisting of Banca d'Italia, ABI, banks and financial institutions, SIA operates in many areas of the financial sector, providing fundamental products such as billing and financial service management systems, as well as specialized solutions including trading, interbanking corporate banking, e-government, risk management, clearing and Internet based services. Since 1986 SIA has provided a unified network infrastructure to the financial community connecting over 1000 financial organizations which, in just one year (2004) transported approximately 7 trillion bytes with a reliability rate of over 99.999%.

SIA has proven its continuous commitment towards the evolution of billing systems, starting with the implementation of the National Interbanking Network and in the 90's, with the design and development of data communications market architectures for Borsa Italiana and Interbanking Deposits Market, to applying data communication solutions in the Treasury Securities Market. Always focused on ensuring high service levels, over the years SIA never lost track of the fundamental criteria to be adopted in the implementation of every project - a practice also known as the 5 I's (in Italian). Insieme (together), Internazionalizzazione (internationalization), Impegno

(commitment), Innovazione (innovation), Iniziativa (initiative/enterprise).

Giorgio Signorini, SIA Director, confirms how technological innovation is at the core of the company's mission. "Our focus is on services, independently of the customer's size or importance. The effectiveness of our approach is ratified by the European Central Bank who defined our network 'an example to follow'. To provide services at the highest level it is necessary to be perfectly aligned with technological innovation".

From project to implementation: technology one step at a time.

SIA is distributed across two sites, with two Service Units responsible for delivering services. One manages primarily the delivery of mainframe services, while the other, TFO (Front Office Technologies), is dedicated to front office and departmental systems. Over time multiple SANs dedicated to different services have been implemented within TFO to respond to the requirements caused by the vast amount of services delivered by each department. The increased demand for storage and disaster recovery services combined with the high management costs of the previous infrastructure are the main reasons which prompted SIA to rationalize the system. "The need to maintain different SANs with a limited amount of well structured space (GBs) but with faster access speed brought to exceedingly high costs per giga and up to 40% switch ports waste rate", explains **Roberto Oriano**, head of infrastructure management. "When disaster recovery requirements also started to increase we thought it was time to streamline the architecture infrastructure together with services requiring this solution".

The flexibility of Cisco Systems technology and intelligent networks is the main reason leading SIA to select Cisco Storage solutions. "We compared offerings from different vendors to identify which one most responded to our current requirements; we selected Cisco not only because its solutions provided answers to today's requirements but also ensured future benefits.

The implementation of Cisco solutions provided a high degree of flexibility in diversifying the services delivered and responding to our departments' requirements". Cisco worked closely with SIA in this direction from the very start. The recommended devices were presented in a pilot installation to enable a view of the solution 'at work', with **Silvano Gai**, one of Cisco's greatest experts in this technology, directly involved in the project.

"Cisco has always been very open and available", highlights Signorini. "The major aspects of the development of this project have been: Silvano Gai's collaboration, the visit to the Monza labs, and the internal support provided by **Luciano Pomelli**, Consulting Systems Engineer of Cisco Systems Italy". Great enthusiasm was shown also on the Cisco side. "A key element adding strategic value to the project was SIA's need to streamline their SAN to maximize the benefits achieved", comments **Claudio Rossi**, in charge of the implementation. "SIA can now dramatically reduce its storage management costs and achieve high performances from the disks installed on the network".

The technology.

SIA has chosen Cisco Systems Storage solutions with the adoption of the Cisco MDS 9000 product family enabling, through intelligent network features, high availability, advanced security and unified management. Such issues as managing data on different SANs, increased security requirements and maintaining the value of existing resources, have been addressed fully with the implementation of the Cisco solution. The adoption of the MDS 9000 Family led initially to consolidating the SANs' infrastructure with improved use of network resources and a reduced amount of switches to manage. The next step was Storage resource sharing, providing optimized use of Storage resources through maximum sharing, the option of consolidating resources towards the implementation of a storage-utility model. With this model the infrastructure is managed separately, allowing each operator to 'view' and 'operate' exclusively in his/her logic partition (VSAN role management).

The MDS9000 solution also enables overall security of the system simplifying the adoption of a DR model in compliance with the new regulatory requirements with an architecture open to the future. The adoption of this solution led to the implementation of VSANs which, leveraging the maximum flexibility of Cisco intelligent networks, enables to identify requirements, act wherever necessary, relying on high level diagnostics to be able to always ensure network storage services and maximum security at no extra cost.



Adriano Marini, the infrastructure designer and developer, illustrates the benefits achieved by SIA with the adoption of Cisco products. "The Cisco solution introduces virtualization at the Storage level with limited restrictions enabling to maintain all islands with their services". With the implementation of Virtual SANs every SAN maintains its identity while packets are serialized. This has enabled SIA maximum streamlining of interconnection ports while reducing costs and maintaining the specificity of each dedicated island.

Current and future benefits.

The benefits achieved from the adoption of Cisco solutions are not related only to existing requirements. The innovative technologies will provide visible benefits also in the future. In fact, the adoption of interoperable modules will enable the integration of devices without requiring changes to the existing infrastructure. Additional benefits are also provided by the possibility of implementing features remotely at many miles distance, enabling groups who are very far apart to work together. "The technology we have adopted is young but already consolidated, and Cisco offers a complete reliability guarantee", closes Signorini. "Cisco is a point of reference: the solutions adopted by the market become technology standards for their exclusive characteristics".



Link utili

Cisco Systems

<http://www.cisco.com>

SIA

<http://www.sia.it>

Storage Area Networking

<http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/hw/ps4159/index.html>



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