Schenck

WHO:
Schenck, a full-service CPA and business consulting firm

CHALLENGES:
Severe application performance slowdown and 14-hour backup times

IT ENVIRONMENT:
Two data centers, ProSystem fx, Tax Prep, Document Management, MS HyperV, Exchange, Office, MS remote app

SOLUTION:
Kaminario K2 all-flash arrays in the primary and secondary data centers supplying required performance for critical applications

BENEFITS:
- Productivity increased
- Performance problems eliminated
- Data backup speed accelerated
- Budget satisfied
- Energy & space savings

Predictability, Performance, & Revenue Assurance

K2's architecture in support of business confidence

Executive Summary

Facing severe application performance slowdowns, Schenck, a CPA and consulting firm, was seeing impacts on staff productivity and client satisfaction. They needed to resolve data storage latency issues before the next tax season started. After conducting proof of concept testing on storage arrays from several providers, they turned to Kaminario. A thorough evaluation of Kaminario's product, company culture, and support systems convinced Schenck. They installed K2 all-flash arrays in two data centers and immediately resolved their performance and productivity challenges.

Schenck Overview

Schenck is an integrated, full-service consulting firm with eight locations in Wisconsin. One of the nation's top 50 full-service CPA and consulting firms, Schenck provides financial and business advice to growing organizations. With nearly 600 employees, Schenck delivers services ranging from business accounting and tax planning to mergers and acquisitions, HR consulting, medical billing, wealth advisory services, and more.

The Challenge

As a full-service CPA and financial consulting firm, Schenck requires solid and reliable technology that supports their staff, accountants, consultants, and clients. That means data is always on, always available, protected, backed up and secure. Their automated trading platform runs 24X7. All IT systems and applications must reliably operate at peak performance, especially during tax season when they are at their busiest. Unfortunately, that need wasn't being satisfied.

Schenck's CPAs and consultants rely upon several sophisticated accounting and tax preparation applications to deliver their services. As the loads increased, some systems would slow to a crawl. Once tax season was underway, response times could stretch to 200ms and more. Even under light loads, average latency was still in the 20-30ms range. Applications were unresponsive. Screens seemed to take forever to refresh. During the busy tax season, every hour of downtime costs the firm substantially.

> "The K2 is helping us to increase revenue. We've ramped up a new SaaS offering that would not have been possible before. Our clients would have been very dissatisfied with the poor performance our old platform delivered. Now, as many transactions as we are pumping through the system, the K2 is sitting there laughing at us. We're nowhere near the limits of the system. And that's good for business."

Damian Sleger,
Lead Systems Engineer
at Schenck

Examining Options

It was clear that Schenck's data storage systems were causing the slowdowns. The 3PAR Adaptive Optimization solution was initially considered a high-end approach. It blended Tier 1 and Tier 2 disks using an automated process to manage data lifecycles. Now, with too much data to hold in Tier 1, the system was automatically moving hot data to near-line storage. They'd exceeded system capabilities, and now servers were crashing. Additional hard drives were added to servers in an attempt to balance the system, but that was clearly a temporary fix.

With the next tax season looming, the Schenck IT team began looking at alternatives. They wanted a single tier of high-performance storage and initiated Proof of Concept (POC) testing. It was a "round up the usual suspects" exercise that included Nimble, Pure, and NetApp. Prior experience with HP's 3PAR made them an unlikely choice.

While the POCs were underway, Damian Sleger, the lead engineer, continued his research and found some eye-opening specifications (http://www.storageperformance.org/) hat put Kaminario's K2 in the performance lead. Although he and his boss had not previously encountered Kaminario, it was hard to ignore the speed numbers. "We knew we wanted the fastest we could get and independent evaluations put Kaminario at the top," said Sleger. "So we called them in."

IMMEDIATE BENEFITS:

- **Productivity increased:** not a single call about system performance since K2 installation – all consultants working without interference or non-productive system outages

- **Performance problems eliminated:** increased performance and decreased latency; from 200ms peaks and 20-30ms average latency to 0.24-0.26ms regardless of load

- **Data backup speed acceleration:** times reduced from fourteen hours+ to less than 2.3 hours

- **Budget satisfied:** K2 initial cost and all-inclusive packaging satisfied the initial cost target as well as provided options for additional functionality without added expense

- **Wait times eliminated:** a full reboot of all virtual servers is accomplished in under 3 minutes

- **Service assurance:** "awesome" stateside support interactions have been needed only for planned maintenance such as firmware updates

- **Energy & space savings:** K2 has helped alleviate data center power consumption and cooling issues, a consideration in the K2 purchase

The Solution

As the POC testing was winding down, the Schenck team still wasn't satisfied with their choices. So, they took a closer look at the Kaminario's K2 all-flash storage array. "There were things about each of the others that we didn't like, and we liked everything we saw in the K2," said Sleger. "They were in our price range, and the performance was the better than anything else we could afford--and honestly, better than most systems we could not afford."

The Schenck team examined every Kaminario technology detail with the account team and Kaminario engineering. They had conversations about the technology and the company culture with Dani Golan, Kaminario's CEO and founder. Soon they were convinced that this was the superior architecture and technology they were seeking. So with assurances of sub-millisecond response times and standby systems if called for, they ordered K2s to be installed in each of their data centers. Installations were all done in a single day. The transition from old systems was completed in only three days; just in time for tax season. Their application performance immediately stabilized at 0.24-0.26ms regardless of application load.

What's Next

Gradually replace all spinning disc with all-flash.

> "As a buyer we were impressed by the culture of the company and appreciated the commitment of the people. And we have not been disappointed. Everyone we spoke to at Kaminario was confident about the product and the promise of performance. No mudslinging at competitors, just confidence."

Damian Sleger
Schenck Lead Systems Engineer
Server and Storage

Contact

Contact a business development representative to answer any questions you may have.

Schedule a Demo

Schedule a demo with an engineer and learn if Kaminario's solution works for you.

Request a Quote

Request a quote for your application from our business development team.

About Kaminario

Kaminario, the leading all-flash storage company, is redefining the future of modern data centers. Its unique solution enables organizations to succeed in today's on-demand world and prepares them to seamlessly handle tomorrow's innovations. Only Kaminario K2 delivers the agility, scalability, performance and economics a data center requires to deal with today's cloud-first, dynamic world and provide real-time data access -- anywhere, anytime. Hundreds of customers rely on the Kaminario K2 all-flash array to power their mission critical applications and safeguard their digital ecosystem. Headquartered in Needham, MA, Kaminario works with an extensive network of resellers and distributors, globally.

For more information, visit www.kaminario.com

Kaminario, the Kaminario logo and SPEAR are registered trademarks of Kaminario Inc.

K-RAID, Perpetual Array and HealthShield are trademarks of Kaminario, Inc.