

Banca Popolare di Sondrio, a cooperative joint-stock company (società cooperativa per azioni), is the parent company of the Banca Popolare di Sondrio Banking Group and one of the leading lending institutions in northern Italy and beyond. The bank's historic mission has led it to develop a very deep relationship with the territory it serves. The bank needed to acquire advanced solutions to save time and resources and protect its investment in technology. In May 2017, Banca Popolare di Sondrio installed Pure Storage FlashArray to simplify management of business complexity and free-up time and resources to dedicate to higher value-added activities.

 **Banca Popolare di Sondrio****BUSINESS TRANSFORMATION**

Alignment between the data center and operations produces lower waiting times, enhanced application availability, and faster data processing speed.

GEO

Italy

INDUSTRY

Finance and Banks

“We want to continue to offer the best to our clients, and with the support of Pure Storage we will be able to get the maximum value from the technology and combine it with that human touch that is indispensable for the success of the business.”

Piergiorgio Spagnolatti,
IT Infrastructure Manager

THE CHALLENGES OF GROWING A RELATIONSHIP OF TRUST WITH CUSTOMERS

Banca Popolare di Sondrio is a lending institution that is highly focused on its relationship with its customers. Established in 1871, it was among the first to be inspired by the values of the popular cooperative credit movement. With a geographical network of more than 330 branches, the bank has share capital of more than EUR 1.36 billion and assets exceeding EUR 2.25 billion.

The Group's entrepreneurship and its proximity to the large European financial centers encourages a push toward an ongoing search for innovation and new business opportunities. The expansion in the '90s gave rise to the Banca Popolare di Sondrio Banking Group.

New IT challenges are the natural result of this continual business development, which leads to an increase in activities to be managed, and in clients, including internal clients, to satisfy.

“We're talking about the need to manage a significant number of applications and systems,” explained Piergiorgio Spagnolatti, the IT Infrastructure Manager at Banca di Sondrio. “The increase in applications poses different risks than in the past. We saw the need to acquire advanced solutions to save time and resources and protect our investment in technology, within a sustainable upgrade framework that would allow us to adapt the information systems architecture and manage operations in a more rational way.”

UPGRADING THE TECHNOLOGY INFRASTRUCTURE

Banca Popolare di Sondrio manages 1,400 servers, with 99.6% virtualized machines. Pure Storage contributed significantly to upgrading the technology infrastructure, thus making it possible, Spagnolatti emphasized, “to simplify the complexity, even where enterprise-class solutions are involved. The three main advantages have been greater data availability, superior performance and security.”

“Real benefits have even exceeded product expectations and, frankly, we are unaware of solutions on the market that can compare to Pure Storage.”

All of this translates into advantages for the business, thanks to the alignment between the data center and operations that produces lower waiting times, enhanced application availability, and faster data processing speed.

COMPANY:

Banca Popolare di Sondrio
www.popso.it

USE CASE:

- VSI – VMware® vSphere®

CHALLENGES:

- Manage the increase in business applications.
- Perform the upgrade without service interruptions.
- Align the data center and business operations, also to improve the user experience.

IT TRANSFORMATION:

- 99.6% of servers have been virtualized.
- Data deduplication ratio is now 4:1.
- Cooling system costs have been reduced by 80%.
- The bank has consolidated 60% of total data and applications on Pure Storage.

“Pure Storage is truly a disruptive brand that has solved the problem of obsolescence. It has made technological evolution of the product foreseeable by making the latest version available without any change in machines and significantly simplifying services architecture.”

Piergiorgio Spagnolatti,
IT Infrastructure Manager

Banca Popolare di Sondrio is using Pure Storage solutions in all work environments, from Internet banking and branch operation to lending — even to the gradual replacement of legacy systems. “All of the business-critical applications are managed by FlashArray, as are the application environments and the data environments,” Spagnolatti explained. What really makes the difference, in Spagnolatti’s opinion, is the paradigm change during the capacity planning stage to correctly size the applications. “Performance improved significantly, thanks to consistently careful and ongoing planning enabled by the Pure Storage technology, which allowed the data to be compressed and deduplicated in a 4:1 ratio and to access the data with waiting times less than a millisecond. From this standpoint, the investment in storage space and in terabytes is very advantageous, and the investment also has a longer life span in terms of capacity.”

The smaller data center footprint reduced the cost of cooling systems by 80%, and the reduction in physical space also saved on electricity costs. “To give an example, with Pure Storage we have only three rack units, whereas before the same activities were performed by machines in three cabinets. The difference could not be more obvious.”

The value chain also impacts administrative activities, with savings of up to 80% of costs. In terms of deployment speed, the numbers speak for themselves: only a few hours to install the system, one day for data migration, and a few days to complete the entire system migration. The Bank has been using Pure Storage solutions for about six months, and after a first stage is now embarking on the second stage with a consolidation of 60% of the data and applications allocated on its systems. By spring 2019, the Bank expects to migrate 80% of the data to its two FlashArrays.

According to Spagnolatti, the advantages and benefits of Pure Storage are not surprising, if one considers the brand and what it represents on the market. The brand is known not only for the reliability and quality of the products but also because it has been able to renew itself over time and continuously position itself as “disruptive” — in protection from obsolescence.

“Thanks to the Pure Evergreen™ Storage model, Pure Storage has made technological evolution of the product foreseeable by periodically making the latest version available without any change in machines,” said Spagnolatti. “In addition, the simplification of architecture and use is truly a significant value-add. Because of these features, machines need not be turned off during upgrades and business continuity is ensured.”

SIMPLICITY, PERFORMANCE, AND AVAILABILITY FOR BANK ACCOUNTS AND FOR IT SYSTEMS

Spagnolatti said that if he had to summarize the results that the Pure Storage implementation has brought to Banca Popolare di Sondrio in three key words, he would say simplicity, performance, and availability. “These should be the cornerstones of IT services of the future, when we’re talking about enterprise storage,” added Spagnolatti.

“Proper management of a company’s information assets also yields other advantages, during the pre-sale stage, customer support, and extension of the post-sale relationship,” affirmed Spagnolatti. “To confirm our position in the market and distinguish ourselves from competitors, product quality has become ever more central. That quality goes beyond the product to include services and new channels for contact and dialog with the public. An efficient and effective corporate IT system can really make a big difference in the value chain or, as it’s often said, the value-proposition to the market,” explained Spagnolatti.

IT, technological innovation, and a focus on the youngest customer segments that are oriented towards new generation services, are the strategic factors for growth because they enable a new kind of relationship with the public the Bank is targeting. The user experience is ever more central for the success of the business, because in addition to offering top-quality services, customers' loyalty must be won so they will become brand ambassadors.

"As far as we're concerned, we couldn't be more satisfied with our experience with Pure Storage, so much so that we would give them the highest grade of A+," Spagnolatti remarked. "In assessing the overall benefit of an IT solution, one of the most important factors to consider is the total cost of ownership (TCO). If we're talking about TCO to assess the adequacy of an IT product, even from this standpoint we are completely satisfied with our choice of Pure Storage."

A GREAT TRADITION OPEN TO THE FUTURE

In the future, in addition to migrating almost all of its computer data to Pure Storage systems by April 2019, the Bank would like to create a true machine cluster, developing it from the current single node.

"It is important to note the paradigm change: we're not talking about lengthy planning to modify the system architecture or the workload. Thanks to Pure Storage, we can work without service interruption."

IT has evolved to become faster to manage without downtime or interruptions in providing services. Spagnolatti spoke of "reliability, resilience, and system speed," to the point that it is almost no longer necessary to warn internal users at the Bank about data migration operations in progress — they take place without perceptibly slowing down the system.

"We want to continue to offer the best to our customers, and with the support of Pure Storage we will be able to get the maximum value from the technology and combine it with that human touch that is indispensable for the success of the business," Spagnolatti concluded.



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