



PROACT

CASE STUDY



AFA Insurance

Proact introduces future-proof enterprise storage and backup platform

Summary

Challenge

AFA Insurance needed to update its infrastructure to boost overall performance and make backups faster. The existing storage platform, using a NetApp MetroCluster, had served the company well.

Solution

- NetApp AFF All-Flash primary storage, mirrored through a MetroCluster.
- Commvault Complete Backup & Recovery (snapshot-based backup).
- Hardware and software support for storage platform provided by proact Proact.

AFA Insurance sought to update its IT infrastructure to achieve better enterprise application performance. The company opted to continue its partnership with Proact and implemented a modern, future-proof primary storage platform as well as a fast backup solution which helps developers do a better job.

AFA Insurance is owned by major organisations in Sweden's labour market and has the mission to manage insurance plans defined by collective labour agreements. More than four million people are covered by AFA insurances, which provide financial support in the event of incapacity for work.

AFA Insurance manages a large number of applications and databases in its enterprise IT environment, which is fully virtualised and includes both Windows and Linux based systems. Not wanting to change this well-established foundation, AFA's infrastructure was due for an update. There was a general need for higher performance, enhanced support for systems development and a requirement to adopt state-of-the-art software technology.

AFA Insurance had positive experiences from its existing enterprise storage platform which had been delivered and supported by Proact. This architecture was based on NetApp MetroCluster technology, where data was mirrored between two geographically separated data centres to ensure security and high availability. The partnership with Proact has involved more than the technology used by the company.

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Service Manager Datacenter
AFA Insurance

Benefits

- Substantially shorter response times for AFA Insurance' key enterprise applications.
- Dramatically faster backup and restore.
- The option to directly create database clones from backup for testing purposes also helps developers become more productive.

Faster response times using All-Flash

Proact developed a proposal for modernising and future-proofing enterprise storage, which AFA Insurance embraced. This included an upgrade of the MetroCluster storage platform where conventional rotating disk was replaced by All-Flash storage arrays, delivering superior performance. The net result was significantly improved response times for users of AFA's main enterprise applications, which to a large extent are developed in-house.

The upgrade also boosted backup performance. The solution, designed by Proact, meant that the existing primary storage system, based on conventional disk drives, could be repurposed as a backup system. It could serve as a replacement for the older tape library used for regular backup of enterprise data, which instead could be retired. Software was also migrated, as AFA Insurance switched to Commvault's backup and data management platform to orchestrate the NetApp solution.

The new solution uses snapshot-based backups within the MetroCluster and then replicates to the secondary storage platform. This drastically reduces the storage footprint while making the process much quicker. The shortened backup window enables an improved RPO (recovery point objective) target, as more recent datasets can be used for restore.

Cloning feature helps developers

The ability to quickly "clone" large data volumes is also used by AFA Insurance for its software development as it provides a convenient way for developers to create test instances of databases, e.g. for a key business intelligence application based on the SAS analytics platform and used by claims handlers for risk calculation.

Previously, it took five hours to create a database copy through backup restore. Thanks to NetApp's FlexClone feature, this procedure now takes seconds because the entire data volume doesn't have to be copied on each occasion.

Aside from the performance gains, the new storage solution also provides support to AFA Insurance for the implementation of the General Data Protection Directive (GDPR), which entails new requirements for storing and managing personal data. The solution has several features which facilitate GDPR compliance for AFA Insurance, including the option to encrypt data, auditing and that individual access right profiles can be tied to the storage platform's management tools.

Another benefit with Commvault's modern data management platform is that it enables AFA Insurance to easily migrate its backup to various types of cloud services with no impact on security or functionality, should the company want to do so in the future.

Personal chemistry

The partnership includes regular service reviews where Proact and AFA Insurance work together to examine current issues and address any challenges they see coming. Proact also contributes as advisors, e.g. through workshops where innovative concepts and solutions are studied.

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About AFA Insurance

AFA Insurance is an organisation which, based on collective agreements, provides financial support to employees within the private sector, municipalities and county councils in the event of incapacity for work due to sickness, work injury, shortage of work, death and parental leave. More than 4.7 million people are covered by at least one AFA insurance plan. AFA Insurance is a nonprofit organisation with assets under management totalling about 200 billion Swedish kronor. An important part of its mission is supporting research and projects which actively contribute to improving work environments. AFA Insurance has some 650 employees and is owned by the Sweden's major labour market parties.
www.afaforsakring.se

Benefits



Shorter response times

Updated platform with All-Flash primary storage delivers substantially shorter response times for key enterprise applications.



Developer support

The new database cloning feature helps developers create test instances almost instantly.



Lightning-fast backup and restore

Snapshot-based backup saves storage space and shortens backup cycles – both for backup and restore operations.



Knowledge transfer

For AFA Insurance, Proact's experts are more than advisors, they also contribute their knowledge to the organisation.

About Proact

Proact is Europe's leading specialist in data and information management with focus on cloud services and data centre solutions. We help our customers to store, connect, protect, secure and drive value through their data whilst increasing agility, productivity and efficiency.

We've completed thousands of successful projects around the world, have more than 4,000 customers and currently manage hundreds of petabytes of information in the cloud. We employ over 1,000 people in 15 countries across Europe and North America.

Founded in 1994, our parent company, Proact IT Group AB (publ), was listed on Nasdaq Stockholm in 1999 (under the symbol PACT).

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