



CASE STUDY

Latisys Favors 8Gb Fibre Channel for Expanding Datacenter Services

The Next Step in High Performance Networking

Challenge

Latisys had a diverse and growing client base. This client base was using more virtual machines in their blade server environments, reducing the time allowed for large data backups. Latisys is using a growth-by-acquisition model. To continue to meet the highest levels of customer satisfaction and integrate businesses during acquisition, Latisys needed the highest performing, most reliable Fibre Channel network.

Solution

A QLogic 8Gb Fibre Channel network technology with high performance and scalability in a virtual environment.

Results

The QLogic 8Gb Fibre Channel solution helps Latisys deliver high-system availability (99.999 percent uptime), and reduce backup times from hours to minutes. Latisys increased the density for virtual servers, and provided investment protection using the latest technology while maintaining compatibility with existing infrastructure, and lower power consumption. All of this lowers the total cost of ownership. These business results position Latisys for growth through their merger and acquisition strategy.



The Latisys Network Operations Center (NOC) is the focal point of all monitoring, problem tracking, remote management and problem resolution in supporting the Latisys Managed Hosting clients. Using advanced technology to contact the right people at the right time, the NOC keeps the customer informed and is able to dispatch the correct resource, whether it be Latisys personnel, customer personnel or even third party providers, to ensure a speedy resolution to every issue. In addition, the NOC receives all incoming operations calls for faults and issues detected by the customer as well as requests for additional services. The NOC ensures that our customers are always informed, in control, and receiving the best services available in the industry.

The impressive client base of Latisys includes several Fortune 500 companies, and this is because the company is a leading provider of On-Demand Managed Hosting and Virtual Datacenter Services, with a world-class facility that includes dedicated IT experts and a 24x7x365 Network Operations Center. The challenge of how to best serve their customers led to Latisys bringing in QLogic for discussions about meeting their expansion goals.

“At Latisys, ensuring business continuity for our customers is one of the most important aspects of our service,” Oliveira added. “Because we’ve made our reputation on offering managed storage, managed security, operations & administration, and monitoring services, these processes all need to remain transparent to the customer.”

Because the Latisys On-Demand computing platform is based on SAN architecture for network storage, there is a growing need for I/O and network storage performance that may not be support by current technologies, which rapidly led to Latisys evaluating 8Gb Fibre Channel

QLogic 8Gb Fibre Channel Solution

With their top-tier customers in such diverse industries as online gaming, financial services, and e-commerce, it’s no surprise that Latisys immediately saw the potential business benefits for their virtual datacenter clients, with the faster backups, faster throughput, faster SAN replication and improved business continuity made possible by 8Gb Fibre Channel.



“The industry road map is heading toward 8Gb Fibre Channel. And for Latisys, testing and evaluating new technologies like 8Gb Fibre Channel is a key business objective, with a goal of continuously scaling and improving our state-of-the-art network environment,” observed Carlos Oliveira, Ph.D, General Manager for Latisys. “In our case, 8Gb not only offers a smart way to upgrade our current environment, but would also allow us to introduce new premium services for the benefit of our largest customers.”

Because the Latisys environment consists of a mix of ‘real’ blade servers and ‘virtual’ blade servers attached to a storage area network (see fig. 1), the server stacks take the full load of running the LAN subsystem, which serves not only as the customer interface gateway, but also runs security and internet service. The phrase ‘business critical’ doesn’t even cover it – this system needs to maintain 99.999% availability for Latisys to keep its customers up and running.

As 8Gb Fibre Channel now represents the industry’s most powerful solution for high performance networking, the industry-wide datacenter earthquake is spreading. And no one is more conscious of how today’s applications like virtualization, live migration, business continuity, and DR Service Level Agreements are driving the need for 8Gb.

In fact, in today’s multi-core/multi-processor world, where a single PCI Express Gen2 slot can support up to 20Gbits per second, investing in anything other than 8Gb might not be the best path to high performance networking.

The Latisys infrastructure is a text book illustration of how datacenters are evolving, and why 8Gb is needed, especially for SAN replication, which is one of the key Latisys service offerings.

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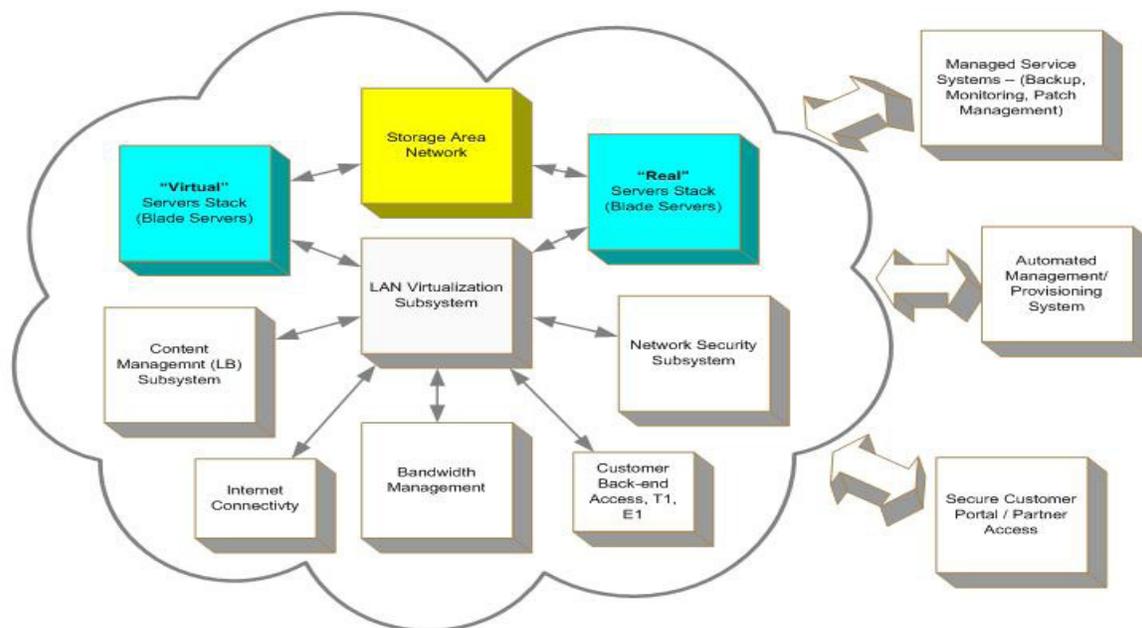
Premium Services and Premium Results

Even a simple process like backup and restore can have a huge impact on the bottom line. “In our meetings with QLogic, it quickly became apparent that 8Gb is truly a high performance computing solution,” Oliveira illustrated. “When you talk about a product that can shorten backup windows from 2 hours to 30 or so minutes, you’re not just talking about speed. You’re talking about a dollar savings in the five-figure range, for our customers running high-demand networks, transactional databases, international computer gaming, and especially financial institutions.”

And as most companies deploying QLogic products know, a major selling point is that they are all fabric-agnostic, and fully backwards compatible with 4Gb and 2Gb devices. QLogic 8Gb HBAs even feature green-friendly benefits such as Dynamic Power Management, and QLogic’s Cool HBA technology, which allows the HBAs to run without heat sinks or cooling fans. All music to the ears of any Datacenter Administrator or IT Director.

“We are excited to be testing and evaluating 8Gb, as this technology not only makes the most sense for meeting the future head-on, but also for building a flexible and scalable network architecture,” Oliveira concluded. “In our business, the company with the smartest network implementation stands to gain everything – better profitability, more reliable datacenter operations, and the increased trust of our ever-growing customer base.”

In summary, the massive aggregation of I/O and the desire to offer new premium services are the main reasons that QLogic’s 8Gb solution quickly attracted the attention of the engineers at Latisys. The combination of powerful blade servers and high utilization with virtual machines are screaming for the ultra-high bandwidth of 8Gb Fibre Channel. For deploying virtual machines on top of blade servers, the most logical choice for superior application performance is a storage area network with 8Gb Fibre Channel, including 8Gb switches, HBAs, and powerful Fabric Management software.



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