



CASE STUDY

Vente

QLogic® 9000 Series Boosts Marketing Power at Experian®

Problem

Build a high-performance, scalable Storage Area Network (SAN) to support a rapidly growing, business-critical database that serves as a repository for online marketing information.

Solution

One QLogic® 9200 Stackable Chassis Switch in an EMC® CX3-40 SAN, with eight production Structured Query Language (SQL) servers and about 60 servers in a virtualized environment.

Results

The QLogic 9200 Stackable Chassis switch, Designed-to-the-Core™ for Open Systems, helped improve performance and scalability. Vente® can more easily expand to support growth requirements and new initiatives.



Looking for a list of migraine sufferers with high-speed Internet access, or cat lovers whose cell phone contracts expire in two months? Vente, a subsidiary of Experian, has all the consumer information you need—and then some. Collecting and aggregating information from an average of over one million online surveys each month, Vente produces reports that help marketers identify consumers, track brand perception, test new products, and quickly respond to new and emerging market trends.

At the heart of Vente lies an enormous database that currently handles roughly 50 million consumer profiles—but that number is always growing. Storage reliability, performance, and scalability are the company's lifeblood. As the number of consumers using the Internet continues to skyrocket, building out a robust system that is easy to manage and quick to scale is the primary goal of Vente IT director, Robert Bradman.

Feature-Rich Director Helps Increase Performance

To support the company's growing data requirements, Bradman and his team of four recently upgraded from a 2-Gbps SAN to a 4-Gbps EMC CX3-40 SAN. However, the existing switches could not support the higher-speed SAN and were limited to 24 ports—the number of ports already being used. With the switches at their limit, there was no room for growth.

Bradman needed a reliable, high-performance director that would allow his team to add ports quickly. After evaluating several leading vendors, Bradman tested the QLogic 9200. Using industry-standard tools, he completely saturated the director interfaces at 4-Gbps and was impressed to see that the system still performed at full speed.

"Nothing else was as feature-rich or performed as well as the 9200," said Bradman. "If we wanted the same features from a QLogic competitor, we would have to pay five or six times as much for a director-class switch. We already use QLogic Fibre Channel Host Bus Adapters and they're stable, solid performers, so the QLogic 9200 was a logical choice."



Implementing the QLogic 9200 was a quick and trouble-free process. "The QLogic team has been incredibly responsive and professional," added Bradman. "When I called technical support with a question, the service agent knew exactly what I was talking about. There was no putting me on hold—QLogic support has been there whenever I needed them."

Modular Growth Delivers Cost-effective Scalability

Growth was the primary driver behind the decision to upgrade: The Vente system currently supports about 24 terabytes of data using an EMC CX3-40 SAN and an EMC CLARiiON® CX500 with numerous fibre-attached devices, including eight production SQL databases. About 60 servers attach to the system in a virtualized environment. However, Bradman and his team are already planning to add four more SQL servers and future projections are sizeable. Bradman explains, "As the data requirements grow and the company continues to release new offerings and services, I'm confident that this QLogic low latency, non-blocking director will provide all the bandwidth we need well into the future."

The ability to add and configure blades in a variety of ways without paying for additional port licenses is a big plus for Bradman. "Our database is constantly growing. Now, we can add and configure blades without having to introduce more vendors, more training, and more complexity. Plus, the entire system can be centrally managed without having to add IT staff," observed Bradman.

Streamlined Management Does More With Less

Ease of management was another major selling point for Bradman and his team. Each QLogic 9200 comes with feature-rich QLogic Enterprise Fabric Suite™ software, a comprehensive centralized management tool with drag-and-drop capability. "Now I can manage virtually every aspect of the director from one location much more easily than with our previous switches," said Bradman. "The QLogic tool is intuitive and uses day-to-day terminology, so I don't have to spend a lot of money training my staff on different products. With the previous switches, I had to use pen and paper to write down notes on what I'd already done. Now, I plug into the Ethernet ports, log into the EMC SAN, and literally drag and drop to create servers. It saves so much time and effort."

"We chose QLogic because of reliability and investment protection. From the performance we've seen so far, the SANbox 9200 is a truly great enterprise solution that will help Vente stay at the forefront of database technology for at least the next seven years."

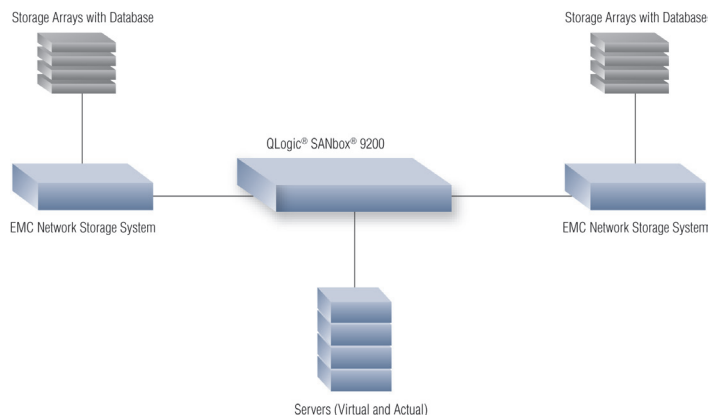
—Robert Bradman, Vente IT director

Since the Vente database is mission-critical to business operations, the redundancy built into the QLogic director is a big hit with the company. The QLogic 9200 boasts 99.999 percent availability with non-disruptive code load and activation updates; redundant hot-pluggable CPU blades, power supply blades, fan blades, and I/O blades; and non-disruptive CPU blade failover.

“As we were deploying the QLogic 9200, I could tell that it was a lot more stable and robust than our previous switches,” said Bradman. “I’m confident that this director provides the fault tolerance and reliability we need for our mission critical operations,”

QLogic Helps Vente Stay Ahead of the Curve

As Vente continues to grow and explore new database technologies, Bradman and his team are constantly exploring new ways to improve production processes and help the company maintain a competitive edge. Therefore, partnering with a company that keeps up with new and emerging technology is important to Bradman. “We chose QLogic because of reliability and investment protection,” explained Bradman. “From the performance we’ve seen so far, the QLogic 9200 is a truly great enterprise solution that will help Vente stay at the forefront of database technology for at least the next seven years.”



As seen in the illustration, the QLogic 9200 is central to the Vente SAN. The Vente system currently supports about 24 terabytes of data using an EMC CX3-40 SAN and an EMC CLARiiON CX500 with numerous fibre-attached devices, including four OEM fibre-attached arrays and eight production SQL databases. Nearly 60 servers attach to the system, including virtualized HP® ProLiant™ DL585 servers.



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