The retail industry has undergone a major transformation in recent years. Growing competition from digital marketplaces, customer demand for more personalized experiences, unpredictable global events like the COVID-19 pandemic—among other market forces—all drive retailers to operate smarter, with greater agility and resilience. For more than 100 years, Salling Group has continually reshaped its business to delight its customers. With more than 1,500 supermarkets, department stores, hypermarkets, and discount stores across four countries—plus webstores, coffee bars, restaurants, and a variety of its brands—Salling Group delivers what consumers want with uncompromising quality and efficiency.
The mission-critical infrastructure required to support this diverse and constantly growing business must also be uncompromising and have the flexibility to scale as needed. Salling Group runs one of the world’s largest SAP BW environments with the SAP HANA 2.0 platform, providing a central source of business intelligence to drive daily decisions. With 20,000 products to stock across 105 product categories, business intelligence is essential for keeping the right items—and the right number of items—on shelves to satisfy Salling Group’s 11 million weekly customer visits in stores.

In this mission-critical infrastructure, high performance is crucial, availability must be uncompromising, and the flexibility to scale as needed is essential because the company adds more than 2 TB of new data to the SAP BW environment every month.

Steen Isdahl, Salling Group’s chief operating officer, says, “Having a system that can scale compute and storage is very important to us. When we take in more business or add a new store into our environment, the BW system must be fully available for this increased demand. The worst inhibitor of our business is lack of scalability.”

The challenge for Salling Group was how to keep its IT organization lean and agile while scaling a continuously expanding infrastructure needed to sustain business growth. The answer was to run the entire SAP BW infrastructure as a service with the agility and expertise of HPE GreenLake.

**PROVIDES THE BEST OF CLOUD, ON-PREMISES**

Considering the complexity of Salling Group’s retail operations and the amount of data growing each month to drive the business, the company selected HPE Superdome Flex compute and HPE 3PAR storage to run its mission-critical SAP environment. The HPE Superdome Flex is configured for high availability, with HPE StoreOnce Backup providing long-term data protection.

However, all this technology is virtually invisible to Salling Group’s operations team. That’s because the HPE hardware platforms, the operating system, SAP HANA 2.0 database, and SAP BW are all managed by HPE GreenLake Management Services. As a result, the Salling Group’s team can spend more time on maximizing the business value of SAP BW without being concerned about the availability, performance, or health of the underlying technology resources—they are simply consumed like a utility service.

Alan Jensen, chief information officer with Salling Group, says, “The HPE GreenLake Management Services team thinks very operationally. Naturally, they are close to the hardware, but they also bring a unique perspective on SAP. That is a huge differentiator and shows in the insights they are able to provide.”
Given the mission-critical nature of the SAP BW environment, with its daily performance demands and rapidly growing SAP HANA 2 database, Salling Group quickly disregarded a public cloud solution. Yet, the IT team needed a cloud experience. HPE GreenLake solved this dilemma.

“We did not see public cloud as a viable option due to the criticality of the Big Data we handle,” Isdahl says. “We have not seen anyone come close to delivering a cloud solution that can match what we’re able to do on-premises with HPE. That is why we appreciate all the cloud tools we get from HPE GreenLake for our private infrastructure. We can go in through the portal, together with our HPE team, and see if this particular application server package is good enough, or if more processing capability or storage is needed. It’s like getting the same benefit of being in the cloud but having our infrastructure on prem. With HPE GreenLake, we’re getting the best of both worlds.”

FREES IT TO FOCUS ON INNOVATION

With HPE GreenLake managing Salling Group’s infrastructure, continually optimizing performance and availability, and scaling to meet growing business demands, Salling Group’s IT team is free to focus on innovation and delivering valuable intelligence to executive decision-makers and store employees across all its brands and channels. For example, the Salling Group team has built an automated business intelligence reporting solution based on the primary data in SAP BW.

This innovative reporting solution, enabled by HPE GreenLake, is a key competitive advantage for Salling Group. It automatically pulls real-time sales and inventory data from the point-of-sale systems at every store, using SAP BW to correlate the real-time information with historical and seasonal data. This correlation determines precisely what products are needed at each store to meet projected consumer demand, which is central to ensuring that each store has the right merchandise on its shelves at the right time to meet customer shopping preferences every day.

The output of this SAP BW solution is 8,000 reports that are automatically emailed to executive management and all 1,500 stores each morning by 6:00 a.m. The reports allow store employees to know what items to expect and when, and management to make higher-level strategic decisions.

Jensen explains, “The daily reports enable store employees to know which products and promotions will maximize sales based on the intelligence we have on what consumers want to buy. At our headquarters, the analytics from SAP BW help business managers determine the optimal assortment of products to meet customer demand and also return the most profit possible. This analytic capability has taken our business to a totally new level of performance.”

24X7 MANAGEMENT FOR OPTIMAL PERFORMANCE AND AVAILABILITY

The success of Salling Group’s SAP BW solution is dependent on having flexibility in compute and storage, with assurance that the business intelligence systems perform reliably 24x7. This enables Salling Group’s IT organization to respond efficiently when the business has special requests. For example, during the COVID-19 pandemic, stores needed reports on which items required special handling, updates on how to organize merchandize, and traffic flow to allow social distancing, changes in staffing procedures, and so on.

Isdahl notes, “Our ability to be responsive when the business has special needs is enabled by HPE GreenLake. It’s the HPE people running our SAP BW infrastructure, making sure we allocate the right compute needed to release accurate reports in the correct sequence. Having that collaboration from HPE GreenLake, with their insight into our business and transparency about how we can evolve together, is what we really appreciate.”

A key part of the HPE GreenLake experience is the dedicated support and advice provided to Salling Group. The HPE GreenLake team is on-site nearly every day working collaboratively with the Salling Group IT team. Whether to answer technical questions, evaluate operational metrics for the systems to ensure performance and quality, or to provide recommendations for improvements when appropriate, the HPE GreenLake team helps Salling Group maximize the benefits of the technology partnership between the two companies.
“The HPE GreenLake team thinks very operationally. Naturally, they are close to the hardware, but they also bring a unique perspective on SAP. That is a huge differentiator and shows in the insights they are able to provide.”

– Alan Jensen, Chief Information Officer, Salling Group

“We place a high value on HPE expertise,” Isdahl says. “The HPE hardware—servers, storage, backup—is superior technology. But when our HPE GreenLake account team sees something that could be improved, they share it. This is very important to us.”

The HPE GreenLake Management Services team also uses predictive analytics from HPE InfoSight to anticipate potential issues before they even appear in Salling Group’s infrastructure. HPE InfoSight collects data from tens of thousands of other HPE systems installed at customer sites, and uses artificial intelligence to predict and automatically resolve system issues before they impact the business.

FLEXIBLE SCALABILITY WITH PREDICTABLE COSTS

Flexibility is critical to Salling Group as the company continues to grow and expand its retail footprint, and flexibility is what HPE GreenLake delivers. Salling Group has constant, intensive demands on its infrastructure, combined with a closely managed budget. The HPE GreenLake pay-as-you-grow model provides Salling Group with a defined cost structure for each server and storage module, enabling the company to get the maximum compute and storage possible within each budget cycle while knowing it can grow in the next cycle at the contracted cost. In this way, Salling Group avoids the costly problem of over-provisioning, which is so common with traditional CAPEX models.

The HPE GreenLake Management Services team reviews uptime, performance statistics, and utilization trends with Salling Group each month so the company can plan when to scale the infrastructure. At that time, adding compute and storage modules is as simple as making a change request in the HPE GreenLake contract.

Jensen points out, “With the HPE GreenLake model, it feels safe and still cost-effective to just build as you go. It’s very easy, very fast, and predictable.”

Isdahl concludes, “HPE GreenLake has been essential in supporting our growing business. It has brought us success in our SAP BW environment, and it is how we continue to move forward with HPE.”