



Plix

Plix Captures a Picture Perfect
SQL Database

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Plixix Captures a Picture Perfect SQL Database

Photo-sharing company allows customers to load and view more photos, much faster, with dramatic database improvements powered by Fusion-io

The Challenge

Plixix is one of the top Internet media-sharing websites in the world. It draws high volumes of site traffic and gets more than 50 million requests a day.

The success of Plixix and other photo-sharing sites hinges on site availability and accessibility. Site response time is directly related to customer return and retention.

Plixix's SQL Server database performance faced an access pattern that presented a daunting challenge to maintaining high performance:

1. Database reads (photo views) consisted of over 50 million per day, resulting in a highly random read access pattern that forced the database to go to disk constantly.
2. Database writes (photo uploads and social interaction posts like comments), on the other hand, were sequential, and blocked read access until they completed. This resulted in deep queuing.
3. Plixix mirrored its databases for redundancy. While necessary for reliability and high availability, this effectively doubled the queues of blocked read operations as redundant writes occurred.

Daniel Marashlian, CTO of Plixix, knew that his challenge was to find a way to eliminate the bottleneck of Plixix's slow disk drives.



SUMMARY OF BENEFITS

- **12x reduction** in average disk queue length
- **10x improvement** in database response time
- **Immediate 100% ROI**
- **4x improvement** in web server request response time
- **Dramatically improved reliability**
- **2x database load capacity**

"Before we got these ioDrives, our database's biggest bottleneck was disk I/O. Now that's resolved, the web servers don't need to wait on the database anymore. Everything just is a lot faster."

Daniel Marashlian, – CTO, Plixix

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The Solution

As Daniel investigated the problem, he contacted a colleague who was the director of a bank's I.T. department and had vast experience with disk I/O bottlenecks. His colleague told him the bank had benchmarked Fusion-io against their huge SAN with "amazing results" and highly recommended Daniel check out the ioDrives.

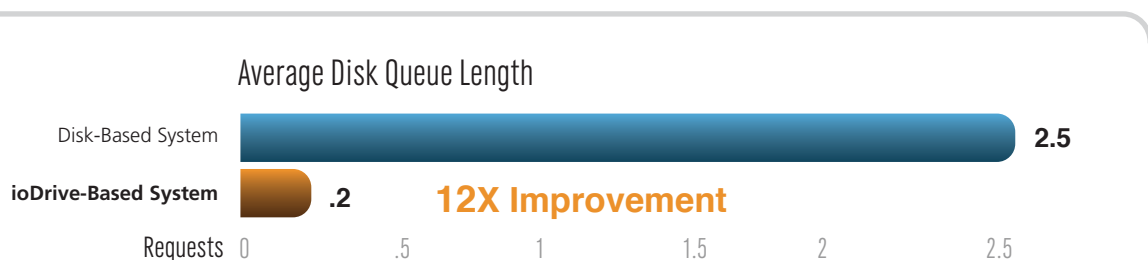
"After a lot of research and discussions with other technology professionals, I concluded that Fusion-io doesn't really have any competition," said Daniel.

ELIMINATING DISK QUEUING

By implementing Fusion ioDrives on its database servers, Daniel was able to take Plixi from an ever-increasingly clogged request queues to a streamlined, super-fast website and database that can handle even Plixi's global-sized request loads.

The ioDrives eliminated the queuing created by write operations. Disk queue length shrunk by more than 10 times—from 2.5 to 0.2. Database response time decreased by 10 times on average, dropping from one second to as low as 10 milliseconds. Daniel estimated this doubled Plixi's overall database load capacity. Finally, the average load time for requests made from the IIS web servers was reduced by almost four times, dropping from an average of 1.8 seconds to as low as 0.4 seconds.

Daniel told us, "Before we had multiple seconds of queuing on the disk, but now the disk queue has more or less gone away. The ioDrives handle all the random reads almost like RAM and, at worst, write queues last about a second instead of the minute it used to take. Our performance monitoring graphs used to look like a mountain range, but now they look like the Great Plains."



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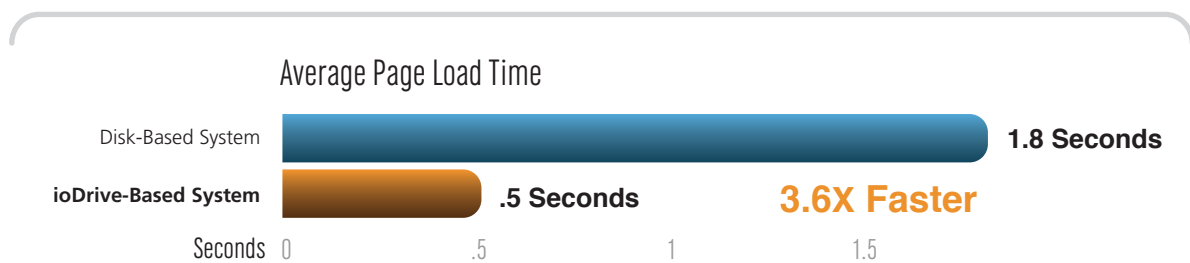
RELIABILITY

An additional benefit that Daniel noted was the improved reliability of Plixi's systems. With just two servers, Plixi created a complete, mirrored database layer.

Daniel said, "When you have parts that move, you have a higher instance of failure. Implementing the ioDrives eliminated a lot of moving components in our disk arrays and improves the reliability of the system."

IMPROVING CUSTOMER CONVERSION AND RETENTION

For Plixi users, any delay in viewing or uploading photos is unacceptable. The improved database performance reduced the wait time between when customers submitted a request to the time data displayed in a browser by 2/3.



As a global site there are no real "off-business hours" in which to tune and optimize performance or work to anticipate coming performance spikes. The ioDrives improved both the performance and the availability of the site.

"Google and Facebook have demonstrated how critical 24x7x365 global availability is for customer retention," said Daniel. "With Fusion-io, everything on our site is just a lot faster. Data loads quickly and without perceptible slowdown under even the heaviest spikes in traffic."

COMPETITIVE ADVANTAGE

Daniel told us that Fusion-io has greatly helped Plixi in the race for competitive advantage. Installing ioDrives powered its performance and availability past one of its primary competitors. Another primary competitor "didn't touch their servers for a year. They just focused on doing whatever it took to achieve peak performance to assure that their site was always accessible," Daniel said. "We were able to match the value of that investment with the purchase of a couple ioDrives. Meanwhile we've developed the most robust photo sharing API on the market."

EXPERT IMPLEMENTATION SUPPORT

Plixi's need for the ioDrives was pressing, so it initially installed and moved just the database files. Once the I/O bottleneck was tamed, Daniel took advantage of Fusion-io's expert services to help him move all web log files onto the ioDrive and optimize Plixi's architecture for the best performance and availability.

Daniel said, "Initially, we just moved the database files to the drives, but a Fusion-io solutions engineer helped us optimize our system for even greater performance and efficiency—something other SSD vendors rarely provide."

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System Changes

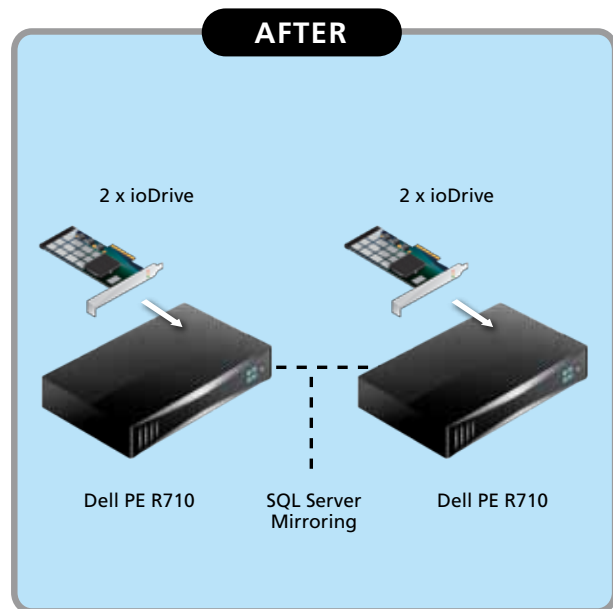
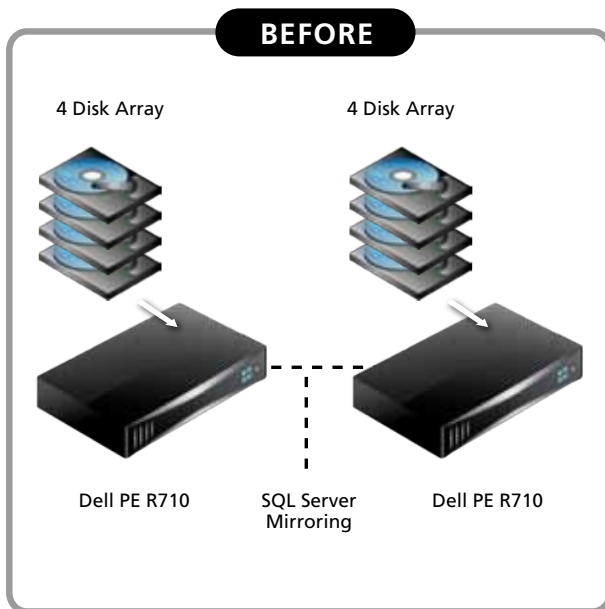
SYSTEM BEFORE

(2) DELL Poweredge R710, Dual Intel 5500, QuadCore, 48GB RAM

- OS: Windows Server 2008 Standard x64 Edition SP2
- Application: Microsoft SQL Server 2008 SP1 with CU7
- 4x 15,000rpmSATA

CHANGES TO SYSTEM

Replaced the two 4 disk arrays with two 160GB Fusion ioDrives in each server.



Performance per rack unit (density)



Improved request execution time from one second to 100 milliseconds = 10x, in the same rack space.

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Summary

Implementing Fusion-io gave Plixi the following benefits:

- **12x reduction** in average disk queue length
- **10x improvement** in database response time
- **Immediate 100% ROI**
- **4x improvement** in web server request response time
- Dramatically improved reliability
- **2x** database load capacity

“The ioDrives delivered the best performance and reliability for the money,” Daniel said. “Our only other option would have been to implement a SAN solution. That would have meant adding hundreds of disks and by extension, many more failure points. The cost savings on the ioDrives over a SAN delivered an immediate 100% ROI.”

About the Company

Plixi is a real-time media-sharing platform for the social web. Plixi allows users to instantly share their media, at the same time, to popular social networks through mobile devices and on the web.

Plixi specializes in providing an innovative open API, and mobile SDKs, to the developer community of Twitter, Facebook, MySpace, LinkedIn, Foursquare and more to come. The platform empowers third-party application developers to quickly add media sharing capabilities and other unique features to their applications without incurring the resources to build, innovate and manage a media sharing infrastructure. Proving the power and scalability of the platform the company’s website is architected using the same open API offered to third-party developers.

The company aims to change the way in which people socially share, discover and interact with media across multiple social networks in a way that feels natural and engaging to users.

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