Nutanix Oils the Path to Hyperconvergence at WD-40 EMEIA

Enterprise Cloud Powers Microsoft Hypervisor in Space Constrained Data Centre

CHALLENGE

As part of its digital transformation program, the UK-based EMEIA headquarters of the WD-40 Company needed to upgrade and enhance its existing data centre infrastructure in order to virtualise additional business critical work-loads as well as improve overall performance. Achieving that aim, however, was something of a challenge due to a lack of available rack space at its Milton Keynes site plus the need to support Microsoft's Hyper-V.

"We started out by looking at adding to our, traditional, 3-tier infrastructure," comments Mark Breed, IT Services Manager at WD-40. "However, the solution proposed by the existing vendor would have exceeded all of the spare capacity in our racks, requiring the addition of new servers, extra storage trays and SAN switching hardware. In the worst case scenario we would have needed to install more racks to cope with what was required."

The complexity of the 3-tier approach and associated management over-heads, particularly of storage, were yet another pressing concern. As a result, WD-40's IT team started looking at hyperconvergence as a way of resolving this and a variety of other issues, only to find their reliance on Microsoft's Hyper-V hypervisor to be yet another sticking point.

"We're a 100 percent Microsoft shop and although Hyper-V wasn't a problem with the 3-tier approach, most of the HCI vendors favoured VMware," explains Breed. "We looked at a number of HCI products, some of which were just starting to support Hyper-V, but the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud was the only platform we felt comfortable with. It was also the only one able to offer us a tried and trusted solution, fully certified to work with the Microsoft hypervisor."

SOLUTION

Requiring just two rack units compared to 8U for the most basic of 3-tier alternatives, the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud platform not only met the Hyper-V requirement, it also fitted the bill in terms of space saving. No additional storage beyond that provided in the Nutanix appliance is now required and no changes were needed to the supporting network infrastructure. The Nutanix hardware simply plugged into the existing 10GbE switches to provide con-nectivity between the hyperconverged compute and storage nodes, making for easy and very rapid installation.

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>
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"Hardware installation took just two and half hours," commented Jeff Longley, WD-40 Systems Administrator, "after which it was just a matter of migrating existing VMs and building new ones to allow us to virtualise workloads still running on legacy servers."

The initial migration process took just a few days and, overall, the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud solution at WD-40 now hosts 52 virtual workloads including the company's Exchange, SharePoint and SQL database servers, together utilising just over half of the 30TB capacity available in the Nutanix cluster.

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The Nutanix platform is also used for file and print sharing as well as development and support of shared applications and, should the company ever decide to move away from Hyper-V, the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud also supports VMware as well as the Nutanix Acropolis Hypervisor.

RESULTS

It hasn't taken long to get to grips with the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud or appreciate the many benefits it has to offer compared to a traditional 3-tier infrastructure.

"The support for Hyper-V meant there was less of learning curve and one of the key benefits from my point of view is a much greater insight into what's going on inside the box," comments Systems Administrator, Longley, "That's primarily down to the Prism management interface which allows me keep a close eye on everything through a single console. Not that I need to do that very often - it just works."

According to Longley users were unaware of the migration to the new infrastructure, with no complaints in terms of performance or availability of the office productivity tools now handled by the Nutanix platform. IT support staff, however, have commented on big performance improvements in areas key to their jobs.

"We use the Microsoft Deployment Toolkit (MDT) to create standard desktop PC images," he explains, "and since migrating to Nutanix re-imaging times have gone down from three hours to less than an hour."

Power requirements have been reduced by 41% and cooling bills similarly reduced as the company has been able to decommission legacy hardware which is no longer required. The aim is, ultimately, to halve the number of racks required and the team are well on the path to achieving that goal.

NEXT STEPS

Having seen what the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Platform can do, IT Services Manager, Mark Breed says he is now re-thinking the company's backup and disaster recovery arrangements. "At present we use Veeam Backup and Replication to protect our systems with data replicated to a separate off-site data centre. Dropping Nutanix hardware into that data centre not only makes sense in terms of performance and management, it would also allow us to look at using the Metro high availability features provided as part of the solution."

Similarly, WD-40 is in the middle of switching its ERP supplier and virtualising the associated workloads which, at present, are hosted on a separate physical server infrastructure. This too may soon be hosted by the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud platform enabling the company to further consolidate its data centre hardware while continuing to enhance and develop its IT services.

Company

One of the most recognisable brands in the world, WD-40 is a market leader in the manufacture and distribution of lubrication, maintenance and specialty cleaning products. Turnover reached $378 million in 2015 with over 400 direct employees worldwide.

Industry

Manufacturing and distribution/ Consumer Goods

Business Needs

Modernisation and expansion of existing Hyper-V infrastructure

Solution

› Nutanix Enterprise Cloud

› Nutanix NX-3000 Series clusters running Microsoft Hyper-V

› Nutanix Prism management solution

Benefits

› Continued virtualisation of workloads to a hyperconverged platform certified for Microsoft Hyper-V

› 41% reduction in power and cooling requirements

› Data centre rack footprint significantly reduced

› Single pane of management for compute and storage resources

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