Mauritius Union Assurance Redefines Business as Web-Scale

CHALLENGE

Following mergers and acquisitions, the business has experienced rapid and ongoing IT expansion over the last ten years, which saw it looking to hyperconvergence as an alternative to continual investment into siloed and tiered legacy systems.

The business's core IT infrastructure has been primarily built around multiple storage units, supported by a fibre channel and Ethernet network, with multiple servers from a host of different vendors. As the environment is highly virtualised, the additional demand on its systems was making performance a major issue. The impact of which was predominantly felt in its storage systems reliant on a core network limited to just one gigabit.

"Our main IT challenge was to make the move from a silo-based tiered legacy environment that was impacting both - performance of the systems and business delivery. We wanted a solution that could incorporate storage, networking and compute in a single infrastructure stack," states Rishi Sewnundun, Head of IS at MUA.

"Ultimately, we wanted to improve performance as well as reduce management complexity. We initially investigated myriad offerings on the market from various vendors. After extensive research and trials of various technologies, Nutanix Acropolis with AHV hypervisor scored higher in many areas than its peers and was the obvious choice," states Shailesh Surroop, assistant manager, IS Infrastructure at MUA.

SOLUTION

"During testing, we unearthed that some vendors' solutions carried a higher TCO and did not suit our choice of hypervisor, as well as the fact that we run Citrix Xenserver, it was just easier for us to migrate to AHV which is built on enterprise-class KVM," adds Surroop.

Notably, the team highlights that the Nutanix software can be run on hardware of their choice while still being able to manage multiple disparate hardware environments, another major deciding factor for MUA. Its infrastructure is predominantly Cisco UCS, with UCS running in offices in Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania and Rwanda. Hence, the team opted to deploy Nutanix on Cisco UCS.

"Nutanix Prism provided the easiest and most simplistic dashboard we've ever seen and it is well liked by our IT operations team. The shift from an infrastructure where we had to juggle between multiple appliance consoles and system dashboards to achieving the same thing was huge and the team is absolutely delighted," states Surroop.

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– Shailesh Surroop, assistant manager, IS Infrastructure, Mauritius Union Assurance

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RESULTS

Accordingly, the migration to AHV was completed with ease. "We migrated over 50 VMs in just one week with zero downtime and that included the five mail servers for the entire Group."

Furthermore, we immediately saw notable performance improvements accessing the data centre. Log on time for the Citrix XenDesktop environment was reduced by 14 seconds per session by using NFS, provisioned directly from the Nutanix cluster as it can now leverage the full capabilities of its 10-gigabit network. The team has also been able to improve its own VM and storage provisioning service delivery.

Leveraging the Acropolis Filesystem (AFS) allowed Mauritius Union to move user profiles and shared files off of its storage environment, as well as build user specific quotas, something it has wanted to do for many years.

"Deploying Nutanix was an out-of-the-box experience, it was just so easy to deploy and now subsequently to manage, as a result of Prism. We were up and running in just one day thanks to our technology partner, Secure Services (Mauritius) Ltd," adds Surroop. "Thanks to Nutanix Metro Availability we can now use one solution for box-to-box replication of our storage and VMs, as opposed to the multiple products we used in the past."

Surroop says the support it is currently receiving from Nutanix is exceptional. "We got a call the other day from the Nutanix support people before we even noticed there was an alert on Prism."

"There is no longer a need for individual maintenance of our siloed infrastructure which has allowed us to cut down on costs of maintenance and invest in training. We have also seen a direct impact on our Manex as we have been able to reduce the expensive support needed on the traditional IT infrastructure."

"Nutanix is without a doubt the best investment we have made so far, not just on the infrastructure components, but on the entire Nutanix software stack. We initially set out to deploy a hyperconverged solution and ended up with a whole lot more than that. In fact, it gave us a web-scale solution when everyone is still talking about hyperconvergence."

NEXT STEPS

Looking ahead the company is testing the feasibility of running its Oracle environment on Nutanix. "We know it will work, but we are currently navigating the structure of Oracle's licensing with them. In our business roadmap and based on the experience we have had to date, we want to move everything onto Nutanix, which includes some 100 TBs of storage," ends Sewnundun.

COMPANY

Established in 1948, The Mauritius Union Assurance (MUA) is a leading African financial services company specialising in insurance, corporate pensions, investment and loan products, it is listed on the Stock Exchange of Mauritius.

INDUSTRY

Financial Services

BUSINESS NEEDS

A hyperconverged solution to flatten technology silos and improve performance and management.

SOLUTION

› Nutanix Acropolis Cloud OS

› Nutanix AHV hypervisor

› Nutanix Prism management

BENEFITS

› A completely reinvented environment running web-scale for the whole business.

› Simplification of its virtualization and storage environment.

› Improved access for the Citrix desktop environment by 14 seconds a session.

› A reduction in Capex as a result of less support requirements for storage and server environment.

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