Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Sefar opts for a private cloud solution over a public option

Textile company installs an HPE SimpliVity hyperconverged infrastructure

Industry
Textiles

Objective
Boosting performance for IT system centralization and ensuring more cost-efficient operation

Approach
Initial consideration given to outsourcing the IT infrastructure and then testing of two different hyperconverged systems

IT matters
- 60% less time spent on IT infrastructure management
- Considerably faster backups
- Development of a virtual desktop infrastructure, which now incorporates more than 1,000 clients
- Seamless connectivity to external cloud services

Business matters
- Three to ten times faster performance for the majority of applications and systems
- End users are no longer affected by batch jobs running in the background
- High availability of business processes with fast replication of data between the two data centers

Challenge

Centralizing IT systems requires high performance
A world leader in screen printing and filtration applications, Sefar is known first and foremost for its precision materials. The Swiss group's products are used in a broad range of applications covering everything from electronics to medical technology, automotive industry to architecture. Sefar operates weaving facilities in Switzerland, Romania, and Thailand, and has its own yarn production facilities in four locations worldwide through its Monosuisse arm. Employing a total of 2600 people, Sefar operates a global network of subsidiaries and manufacturing plants across 26 countries and six continents.

From its Swiss headquarters, the 22 employees in the company's IT team operate a largely centralized IT infrastructure used at its 55 sites around the world.

"Over the past few years, we have been increasingly standardizing and centralizing our IT systems. As a result, the demands on the IT infrastructure in terms of performance and scalability have increased considerably," explains Claudio Zollet, head of corporate IT at Sefar.

Infor ERP LN is the company's most important software, as it is used to manage many of its business processes. The control centers at the production sites are connected to the ERP system, providing it with real-time data, for example, regarding the company's looms. "We have been working to Industry 4.0 standards for a long time now. Extremely high availability of the IT infrastructure is therefore hugely important," says Zollet. "It was inevitable that we would need to switch from the existing infrastructure to achieve these aims, if we were to avoid the need to increase the personnel within the IT team."

"As early as the test phase, we realized that we could let the HPE SimpliVity hyperconverged infrastructure run almost fully automatically. This has considerably reduced the amount of time we spend on operating the overall system, which frees us up to work on strategically important areas."

– Claudio Zollet, head of corporate IT, Sefar

Solution

HPE SimpliVity hyperconverged infrastructure is more suitable than an external solution

When the maintenance contract expired for the company's existing IT infrastructure comprising two HPE 3PAR StoreServ storage systems and HPE blade servers, Sefar began to look for a new solution that would meet all of the company's requirements. One option discussed was outsourcing the infrastructure to an external service provider or a cloud service. "But it quickly became clear to us that a private cloud solution based on a hyperconverged platform would give us a consistent overview of all of the components—the storage, the servers, and the network. It was also the better choice financially," says Zollet.

With help from HPE partner, dynawell ag, an IT consulting company based in Bassersdorf, Switzerland with a long-standing relationship with Sefar, Claudio Zollet and his colleagues began to compare hyperconverged infrastructure solutions from a number of different providers. They concluded that the best solution on the market was the HPE SimpliVity hyperconverged infrastructure. "The simplicity and clarity of the HPE hyperconverged infrastructure really impressed us," says Zollet. "As early as the test phase, we realized that we could let the system run almost fully automatically. It autonomously determines the current best place to distribute the virtual servers, for example, in terms of performance,

without us having to intervene manually. This has considerably reduced the amount of time we spend on operating the overall system, which frees us up to work on strategically important areas." Where one employee would once spend 100% of their time on managing the environment, this is now down to just 20%. This increase in efficiency is also ensured by HPE Proactive Care. "This will further improve the stability and operation of our HPE SimpliVity hyperconverged infrastructure," Zollet says with conviction.

Following up with a twinkle in his eye, he adds, "The only downside of testing the HPE SimpliVity solution was that the end users complained that their applications weren't running as quickly when we gave the test system back."

Benefit

Three- to ten-fold increase in performance

This only changed with the installation of the new HPE SimpliVity system, which currently consists of 21 nodes. "There has been a marked improvement in the performance of certain systems," says Zollet. "For example, the data compression feature has reduced the space needed considerably and there has been an astounding acceleration in the backup process. Huge volumes of data can sometimes be saved in a matter of milliseconds. And we no longer experience any interruptions to the backup process."

> "The fact that we could provide so many virtual desktops effortlessly is a great plus for the HPE SimpliVity hyperconverged infrastructure. It wouldn't have worked without it."

– Claudio Zollet, head of corporate IT, Sefar

Customer at a glance

Hardware
- HPE SimpliVity hyperconverged infrastructure with 21 nodes

HPE Pointnext
- HPE Proactive Care

Thanks to the high performance of the HPE SimpliVity hyperconverged infrastructure, batch jobs in the ERP system, which are normally run overnight in Switzerland, no longer affect end users in other parts of the world. Zollet is determined that "the new hyperconverged system has made things faster by a factor of three to ten, depending on the task." Data can now be replicated across Sefar's two data centers at lightning speed.

Sefar has also developed a fully private cloud based around the HPE SimpliVity hyperconverged infrastructure. More than 1,000 virtual desktops now run in the environment, with more being added all the time. "The fact that we could provide so many virtual desktops effortlessly is a great plus for the HPE SimpliVity hyperconverged infrastructure. It wouldn't have worked without it," says Zollet. This example demonstrates that the new IT infrastructure is "opening up new opportunities to implement things in a completely new way."

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