

EMC enterprise-class storage drives rapid growth and market expansion



OVERVIEW

Challenges

- Unreliable storage created service disruptions
- Expansion into cloud market was hindered by lack of high availability and expansion constraints

Solutions

- EMC CLARiiON CX4 networked storage
- EMC Navisphere software
- EMC SnapView software
- EMC FAST
- VMware vSphere and ESX Server virtualization solutions

Key benefits

- Storage performance and availability increased significantly
- Time to provision new LUNs dropped from 20-30 minutes to five minutes
- Automated storage, energy-efficient technologies, and virtualization reduced energy use
- Achieved twice the storage management staffing efficiency over previous architecture

Hosting.com prides itself on supporting clients' mission-critical applications and data assets. With hosted IT infrastructures that enable clients to reduce costs and improve operational performance, Hosting.com strives to achieve the highest standards for IT reliability and flexibility.

Such standards are critical to Hosting.com customers who utilize dedicated infrastructures, as well as those who share storage and servers in cloud computing environments. Because cloud computing affords customers even greater economies of scale and flexibility, Hosting.com is committed to developing its offerings in this area.

Reliability issues with the company's previous storage area network (SAN) infrastructure were beginning to present challenges to achieving these goals. When executing changes, such as creating additional storage via LUN creation, Hosting.com could experience service disruptions lasting several hours.

Hosting.com's merger with HostMySite exacerbated these issues. As the combined entity integrated their cloud infrastructures to provide public and private cloud offerings, it was clear that an enterprise-class storage solution was necessary.

EMC ENTERPRISE SOLUTION HELPS HOSTING.COM MOVE FORWARD

To address these issues and move forward on its business plan, Denver-based Hosting.com closely evaluated NetApp, HDS, and 3Par, before ultimately selecting EMC.

EMC® CLARiiON® CX4 systems are located in multiple Hosting.com data centers across the United States to provide storage capacity to hosted cloud computing and dedicated IT infrastructures. Hosting.com customers leverage EMC storage to support Oracle and SQL Server databases, websites, Microsoft® Exchange, and VMware® virtualization, among many other applications.

The EMC infrastructure utilizes high-performance Fibre Channel and lower-cost SATA drives to address diverse customer requirements based on performance, availability, and cost. Hosting.com also uses EMC Fully Automated Storage Tiering (FAST) software to automate data movement across storage tiers.

In addition, Hosting.com uses EMC SnapView™ software to create live copies of production data and EMC Navisphere® software to centrally manage the EMC storage.

Hosting.com has standardized on VMware ESX® Server and VMware vSphere™ virtualization solutions to run 8,000 virtual machines on approximately 700 physical servers. The virtual machines are stored on EMC CLARiiON.

DRAMATIC IMPROVEMENTS IN AVAILABILITY, PERFORMANCE, AND SCALABILITY

Since deploying EMC, Hosting.com has seen dramatic improvements in availability, performance, and scalability—capabilities that are critical to meeting customer SLAs (service-level agreements).

Michael Escobar, Hosting.com's Storage Operations Team Lead, said, "With EMC, everything has gone according to plan. We also use EMC and vSphere tools for data replication, troubleshooting, and development to increase the availability of our services even more."

Escobar noted that EMC Navisphere enables Hosting.com to monitor storage performance. "It's difficult to estimate workloads in cloud computing environments because they're very diverse and dynamic. So, it's important to measure performance of our data stores, array groups, and overall system health. That way, we can be proactive and ensure we get the best performance out of our cloud at all times."

EMC and VMware solutions also have been critical to driving growth at Hosting.com. In the last year, Hosting.com estimates its EMC infrastructure has grown from 200 to 350 terabytes and forecasts it will more than double over the next 18 months.

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CRAIG MCLELLAN
CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER

"EMC lets us quickly scale at any time to keep up with our growing demand, and that's something that not all vendors can do," said Craig McLellan, Chief Technology Officer, Hosting.com. "Our new cloud sales recently eclipsed our new dedicated hosting sales, which signal an even steeper growth curve in the coming months. We're confident EMC can help us get there."

Hosting.com also offers customers a short-term outsourcing option with its virtual private server (VPS) cloud environment.

"With VPS, we've been able to address new market opportunities with companies that have been traditionally hesitant to outsource, but want to leverage a low-capital expenditure resource for a limited period. CLARiiON and VMware enable us to rapidly and cost-effectively spin up virtual machines for these customers," McLellan added.

Hosting.com also credits EMC and VMware's ease of management and consolidation to lowering both capital expenditures and operational costs. For example, Hosting.com has maintained its staff of two storage engineers even as storage capacity expanded by 75 percent in one year.

"CLARiiON is very easy to manage," says Escobar. "Before, provisioning a single LUN could take 20 minutes or more. Provisioning on EMC is a five-minute process whether a single LUN or hundreds are involved."

With EMC FAST software, lower-demand data is automatically moved from higher-performance Fibre Channel disk to lower-cost SATA drives. Energy costs are reduced with high-efficiency storage cooling features and disks that automatically stop spinning when data access temporarily stops. Eliminating thousands of physical servers with virtualization also contributes to significantly reduced energy costs.

Escobar says, "With all of the automation enabled by EMC and VMware software, we have more time to proactively work on activities that directly benefit our customers and our business. Combine that with cost reductions enabled by consolidation and we're able to pass these savings on to our customers with more competitively priced services."

According to McLellan, EMC will continue to be a strategic partner as Hosting.com expands its focus on cloud computing. "Our cloud customers are no less demanding than our dedicated hosted customers. With EMC enterprise-class solutions as our foundation, all of our customers are assured of the performance, availability, flexibility, and efficiencies their business-critical applications demand."

TAKE THE NEXT STEP

To learn how EMC products, services, and solutions help solve your business and IT challenges, contact your local representative or authorized reseller—or visit us at www.EMC.com.

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