

Mantra Group uses private cloud to support growth

Optus deploys the virtual data centre solution

Yes

Customer story snapshot

Customer : Mantra Group

Industry : Accomodation

Requirements

Enable IT to quickly deploy new sites and services to support the Group's accelerated growth strategy.

Solution

An advanced new data centre environment built around virtualisation and a private cloud environment.

FlexPod® architecture utilising Cisco and NetApp for VMware built on the Cisco Unified Computing System™, Cisco Nexus® switches, NetApp FAS3210 unified storage system and VMware virtualisation as the cloud infrastructure.

Benefits

A scalable and flexible data centre that enables IT to integrate different technologies, virtualise key applications and make services accessible to the whole organisation.

Overview

Mantra Group is one of Australia and New Zealand's largest accommodation providers with a network of over 110 properties operating under the successful brands of Peppers, Mantra and BreakFree. Ranging from hotels and self-contained apartments to luxurious resorts and retreats, Mantra Group's properties are located in every Australian capital city, as well as major holiday destinations including the Great Ocean Road, Tasmania, Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast, Tropical North Queensland and throughout New Zealand.

Challenge

Over the past few years, Mantra Group has achieved great success and grown substantially through a strategy of acquisition, which has meant the company has added one hundred new properties to its portfolio in a three year period. It is an exciting time for the company with the online business also growing and each of the three brands extending out into new markets.

To support this strategy for accelerated growth, Mantra Group looks to its IT team to deliver agility in deploying new sites and services, including the consolidation and centralisation of physical infrastructure, and the ability to commit to sustainable, environmentally conscious business practice.

As well as management's requirements of a nimble IT department able to serve the business quickly and flexibly, Group General Manager IT Garry Rich was also facing challenges in managing the legacy systems from the acquired properties and server capacity restrictions, both in terms of space and computing power.

He explains, "With the level of growth we were experiencing we had hit capacity in the server room relatively quickly, so we started to look at suitable solutions that would facilitate our growth and provide the flexibility to scale up and down in future."

"We had worked previously with Alphawest on a unified communications telephony implementation and because we were considering Cisco, NetApp and VMware technologies, it was a logical step to work with their skilled and experienced team on this project."

Alphawest is now fully integrated with Optus Business.

Solution

To meet its capacity challenges, Mantra Group had taken tenancy in a data centre which allowed them to build an environment to meet their current and emerging business requirements.

Rich explained, "We treated it almost like a greenfields site and wanted to choose carefully what should go into the data centre. In consultation with Alphawest over a few months we decided that virtualisation and a private cloud environment was the delivery method best suited to our needs."

"Alphawest worked closely with us to customise the details of the solution we required and the engineers were very good at walking us through the whole project so that we could see the outcomes clearly," he said. "From our specific ideas Alphawest would deliver a reference design which could be tested and proven as best practice which definitely helped our decision making process."

Following this consultation, Mantra Group selected Alphawest to deploy this solution to meet its expanding data centre requirements, the result was a private cloud solution using a FlexPod® architecture utilising Cisco and NetApp for VMware built on the Cisco Unified Computing System™, Cisco Nexus® switches, NetApp FAS3210 unified storage system and VMware virtualisation as the cloud infrastructure.

Rich said, "For us the most appealing aspect of the FlexPod architecture is that it is genuinely scalable and replaces any vagary. We knew it would give us a repeatable process, templates for future growth and additional deployments, including adding storage."

Installation and deployment of Mantra's new data centre environment was driven by Alphawest and Rich commented that the process was great from start to finish. "We worked with an exceptional lead engineer who ensured the whole project ran smoothly and it delivered what we envisaged to our exact requirements. Alphawest did all the complex installation work and really took the hassle out of it for us. They made it possible to complete the implementation in just 10 days."

Mantra Group found working with Alphawest easy and over the course of the consultation process and implementation a high level of trust developed. Rich commented, "This project was a 'bleeding edge' deployment for Australia – we were one of the first organisations in the country to install a FlexPod – it was very important to us that we worked with an IT services provider that offered a high degree of comfort. And that provider was Alphawest."



"It was very important that we worked with an IT services provider that offered a high degree of comfort."

– Garry Rich, Group General Manager IT, Mantra Group

Yes

Benefits

The creation of Mantra Group's new scalable and flexible data centre virtualisation platform that combines networking, computing, storage and server virtualisation means the IT department can now integrate different technology from acquisitions, virtualise key applications and make services accessible to the whole organisation via a private cloud.

However, beyond the IT department the real benefit of the private cloud to the Mantra Group business is that it can demand and receive more computing power and space at any time. Rich explained, "A good example is a current migration project we're running for our financial package. To facilitate this we've quickly allocated extra processing power to the finance team and then when the migration is complete we will turn back the dial. This kind of scalability and flexibility was simply impossible on our old systems."

The genuine agility of Mantra's private cloud means IT can respond quickly to the demands of the business and also the Australian and New Zealand accommodation market. Rich continued, "More than anything else, the management team and the rest of the organisation really appreciate the fact that when they ask the IT department for something we say yes almost every time and can deliver exactly when they need quickly."

For example, with its virtualised pool of resources Mantra Group has been able to quickly scale up and implement a more comprehensive online reservation system that meets consumer demands. Taking advantage of the dynamic provisioning and scaleout capabilities of the FlexPod it took Mantra less than five days to consolidate its central reservations system to the private cloud and was achieved with zero-downtime.

Rich said, "As well as offering an exceptional online experience for prospective guests, our centralised reservations system provides competitive advantage for all our hotel operators because it gives them real time updates to reservation information including occupancy. This allows them to promote room availability in a wide number of wholesale and retail channels and they can easily build customer loyalty programs and refine their marketing activities." Consolidating Mantra Group's hardware with minimal disruption was an additional benefit of the Alphawest solution. For instance, Mantra has virtualised more than 90 physical servers, 10 storage devices and dozens of legacy systems with VMware vSphere® across the FlexPod solution, resulting in an 80 percent reduction in the physical servers required for core applications.

With the implementation of FlexPod Mantra Group has also been able to expand its environmentally conscious practices beyond its hotel rooms into the data centre. As well as reducing its physical servers in production from 90 to just 24, the IT department's power consumption has decreased by as much as 60 percent. Rich explained, "For example, one chassis in the FlexPod architecture will draw 300 watts per server whereas our legacy system was drawing 1000 watts per server. The savings have been even greater than we anticipated."

Furthermore, moving to a private cloud environment means Mantra Group has eliminated considerable complexity and has achieved new operational efficiencies. The architectural design of the FlexPod solution with its simplified infrastructure management of multiple applications and workloads means the IT team is now more proactive than ever and spends more time focusing on strategic initiatives and less time on maintenance.

Future

With its new private cloud environment, Mantra Group is certainly now well placed to take on the challenges of the Australian and New Zealand accommodation markets and future transformation projects for the business. In addition, Garry Rich and the IT department's next big project will be further migration of the organisation's disaster recovery systems onto the FlexPod architecture. Ensuring that the disaster recovery systems are quick to deploy and flexible enough to meet future needs.

The results

- Reduced from 90 to 24 servers a reduction of 80%
- The IT department is now able to focus on strategic initiatives and spend less time on maintenance
- Elimination of complexity has resulted in new operational efficiencies
- 60% reduction in power consumption. - the IT department has decreased power consumption resulting in power savings greater than expected. and the IT department's next big project will be further migration of the organisation's disaster recovery systems onto the FlexPod architecture. Ensuring that the disaster recovery systems are quick to deploy and flexible enough to meet future needs.

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