

Hosted Microsoft Communications and Collaboration Services consolidated on EMC Information Infrastructure to power rapid business expansion and greater reliability



ESSENTIALS

Challenges

- Acquisition strategy led to 14 disparate technology platforms
- Lack of platform integration was costly and degrading service availability and performance
- Deploying new services across multiple platforms became cost prohibitive

Solutions

- EMC CLARiiON CX4 networked storage
- EMC RecoverPoint software
- EMC Navisphere Management Suite software
- EMC PowerPath software

Key benefits

- Delivery of 15 new services in one year
- Exchange storage costs decreased approximately 45 percent
- TCO reduced by 40 percent
- Full infrastructure recovery timeframes decreased from days to hours

Apptix is a leading provider of business-class, cloud-based communications and collaboration services to 22,000 companies and 300,000 users worldwide. Apptix's hosted offerings include Microsoft® Exchange e-mail, Microsoft SharePoint® collaboration, Mozy online backup, web hosting, and virtual private servers (VPS), as well as Voice over IP phone service, web conferencing, and instant messaging via Microsoft Office Communications Server.

Based in Herndon, Virginia, in the mid 2000s Apptix became the largest provider of hosted Microsoft Exchange by acquiring a number of other hosting vendors. While Apptix benefitted from an expanded customer base and new technologies, it also faced significant challenges in managing 14 diverse, legacy provisioning, billing, and ticketing technology platforms across the different companies.

Because the platforms were not integrated, Apptix's expenditures for redundant staff, facilities, and software maintenance were straining budgets. Network reliability and performance issues were contributing to customer churn. New product launches were cost prohibitive due to extensive customization work needed for services to run across the different platforms. As new customers were added, it also was becoming more difficult to scale the infrastructure.

To increase its profitability and competitive advantage, Apptix decided to engage in the comprehensive consolidation, upgrade, and standardization of its technical environment. For its information infrastructure, Apptix closely evaluated a number of leading storage vendors. Ultimately, Apptix selected EMC®, a Microsoft Global Alliance Partner, for the quality and breadth of its storage and software solutions and Microsoft applications expertise.

“Among the different solutions we examined, EMC stood out from the other vendors by providing top storage quality and reliability as well as demonstrating a deep understanding of Microsoft environments,” says John Kersse, CTO. “With their in-depth Microsoft experience and array of Microsoft technical experts on staff, EMC was able to understand our growth pains and recommend best practices and solutions that were tailored for Microsoft environments.”

EMC AND VMWARE SOLUTIONS ADDRESS THE CHALLENGES

For consolidated storage and protection of customers' hosted data assets, Apptix uses clustered EMC CLARiiON® CX4 systems for Exchange Server, SharePoint, Office Communications Server and other Apptix offerings. Apptix relies on EMC Navisphere® Management Suite and EMC PowerPath® software to provide centralized storage management and high data availability. Additionally, Apptix has virtualized a significant share of its HP servers using VMware® technology to create virtual machines stored on the CLARiiON systems.

To ensure business continuity and 100 percent data protection, Apptix has implemented EMC RecoverPoint software to provide continuous remote replication (CRR) of multiple CLARiiON storage area networks (SANs) located in its geographically dispersed data centers.

“The entire EMC rollout from vendor review to implementation only took four months,” explains Kersse. “Our EMC deployment went very smoothly. We benefitted from EMC and Microsoft’s strong relationship and the way their solutions work together. EMC is much more than just a hardware vendor—they know what it means to be a partner and how to address our fairly complex requirements.”

EMC supported Apptix’s large-scale migration of legacy users from Exchange 2003 to Exchange 2007. As Microsoft rolls out Exchange 2010, EMC also will be assisting Apptix with the upgrade and update of the infrastructure to support new functionality, such as unlimited mailboxes.

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JOHN KERSSE
CTO

“EMC’s expertise in Microsoft Exchange best practices has been invaluable,” says Kersse. “By partnering with EMC, we’ve designed a technical architecture that can support 500,000 Exchange seats, making our infrastructure one of largest Exchange implementations world-wide. We developed the blueprint for how to design and grow Exchange the right way.”

FASTER TIME TO MARKET OF HOSTED SERVICES

The flexibility, scalability and reliability of the EMC infrastructure have allowed Apptix to grow both its customer base and portfolio of services.

“By consolidating onto EMC, we’re scaling our business faster and more reliably than before,” says Kersse. “We’ve grown rapidly into the mid-market and enterprise space. This includes signing a leading healthcare provider, which ramped up our user base from 200,000 to 300,000. Last year alone, we introduced 15 new services, including Microsoft Live Meeting and Communicator, Mozy online backup, and virtual private servers. And we’ve achieved this all while delivering 24x7 service availability and top system performance.”

“This is a very competitive market,” adds Kersse. “Anytime we can launch a new service before other providers, we gain a significant advantage. EMC’s rollup of other companies such as Mozy and VMware has given us a partner that streamlines our ability to offer differentiated services to our customers.”

COST REDUCTIONS WITH THIN PROVISIONING

Apptix credits CLARiiON thin provisioning for enabling cost-efficient scalability. Traditionally, total expected storage capacity is provisioned to servers. With thin provisioning, IT departments only allocate storage as capacity needs grow. This allows Apptix to start customers with small mailbox capacities and add storage gradually as their needs grow.

“Thin provisioning has been a huge success,” says Kersse. “In two years, our number of users jumped from 193,000 to over 300,000 and our storage infrastructure increased by 300 percent. Our storage footprint would be far larger and we would have needed to significantly expand our staff if we didn’t have thin provisioning. In fact, we’ve reduced our Exchange storage costs by roughly 45 percent because we’re utilizing our storage so much more efficiently.”

Because of consolidation, virtualization, and thin provisioning, Apptix also cut its total cost of ownership (TCO) by nearly 40 percent.

ENTERPRISE-CLASS IT FOR ALL CUSTOMERS— LARGE AND SMALL

With RecoverPoint, Apptix continuously replicates data between CLARiiON CX4 SANs located hundreds of miles apart. Should a catastrophic outage occur, Apptix could stage a complete recovery in hours at the alternate site instead of days.

“Our customers rely on our services to run their business so specifying 100 percent uptime is a key business objective,” said Kersse. “With RecoverPoint’s flexibility and powerful replication capabilities, we’re able to meet SLAs for Exchange, SharePoint, and other existing services across multiple SANs while continuing to roll out new offerings.”

“The EMC brand comes with substantial credibility,” concludes Kersse. “Our customers know their e-mails and data are going to be safe, which is tremendous value for us in the hosting market.”

CONTACT US

To learn how EMC products, services, and solutions can 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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