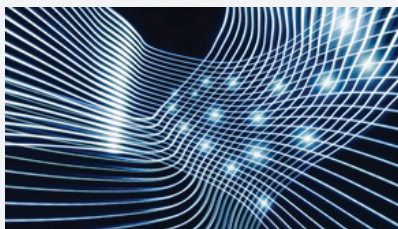


GEMEENTE BALEN

Balen municipality improves public services with affordable EMC VNXe and VMware technology



ESSENTIALS

Challenge

- Increasing capacity and reliability on a limited budget

Solutions

- EMC VNXe
- VMware

Key benefits

- 25 percent increase in operational efficiency compared to previous competitor solution
- Increased scalability—double the number of virtual servers running on VNXe, with room for continued growth
- Improved responsiveness through the ability to deploy new virtual machines in just minutes
- Reduced power and cooling costs
- Simplified management and integration with VMware

The municipality of Balen, located in the Antwerp province of Belgium, has over 21,000 inhabitants and belongs to the electoral and judicial district of Mol. It employs approximately 110 civil employees.

Balen selected EMC® VNXe® unified storage for its affordability and scalability, and has integrated the solution with VMware® technology to better serve its constituents' needs.

CHALLENGES

Balen previously relied on a competitor solution for its SAN storage. However, due to rapid data growth and an ambitious virtualization plan, the municipality decided to seek a more cost-effective and scalable solution. Balen initially considered expanding the legacy system, but found it would be more expensive than acquiring a new platform. Keeping within its limited IT budget, and aligning with the goal of meeting its scalability demands at an affordable cost, Balen decided to deploy a new storage infrastructure.

Bjorn Claes, system administrator for Balen, described the situation, “While we didn’t have any serious problems with our existing storage, we needed more capacity. The system was only two years old, but nevertheless the number of virtual servers had increased rapidly since its purchase.”

Balen’s infrastructure is 99 percent virtualized, with approximately 20 virtual servers, 120 PCs, and a large number of telephone and information screens. Because Balen regularly deploys virtual machines, it needed a storage solution with tight integration with VMware technology and the ability to scale. In addition, as a local government, Balen’s IT budget is limited, so affordability was also key. With only one system administrator, the company also required storage that was easy to manage. EMC VNXe met Balen’s VMware virtual integration requirements, fit its budget, and kept management simple with EMC Unisphere™—a solution which provides a snapshot of system resource use and open alerts, as well as direct access to essential storage and system task options.

SEAMLESS DATA MIGRATION AND INCREASED EFFICIENCY

Balen’s partner, 3-IT, installed the VNXe system and managed the migration from the old environment to the new one in just two hours.

“This deployment was accomplished outside of working hours, for the most part, and with just a couple of hours of planned downtime,” says Dominik Verrydt of 3-IT.

“The implementation of the project went really well,” confirms Claes. “We were very pleased with the support from EMC and our local partner, 3-IT. Their in-depth technical knowledge, flexibility, and open communications helped the project proceed smoothly.”



The VNXe platform supports Balen's municipal government staff members with a wide range of applications, such as a time registration system running on 20 VMware virtual machines.

"With VNXe, we have become 25 percent more efficient in managing our storage environment and configuring VMware data stores than with our previous solution," Claes notes. "The big difference is EMC Unisphere, which makes it easy to work with both the VNXe and VMware environments with a single interface."

Unisphere's integrated dashboard facilitates simple storage management that eliminates complexity with an application-driven approach to provisioning storage. Unisphere's easy-to-use VMware wizard allows Balen to provision new virtual machines with just a few clicks. Balen uses VMware vStorage APIs for Array Integration (VAAI) plug-in capabilities for increased efficiency; offloading VMware storage-related functions—like full clone and space reservation—from the server to the storage system; and enabling better use of server resources for increased performance and consolidation.

"The tight integration between Unisphere and VMware for storage and virtual machines is especially important since I am the only IT administrator for the entire municipality," says Claes. "With the help of VNXe and our broad use of virtualization, we have dramatically reduced the costs of cooling and electricity, as well as our physical footprint. Additionally, the reliability of the VNXe has been great. Its redundant storage processors provide us with much higher availability than our old storage systems, which is as important in government as it is in business."

"In addition to simplicity and affordability, we needed reliability. Our municipal services and software applications are dependent on the IT infrastructure. Without it, our staff members are unable to perform their jobs and provide critical services to the public."

BJORN CLAES
SYSTEM ADMINISTRATOR

MORE PROJECTS POSSIBLE DUE TO VIRTUALIZATION

The local government is quickly adopting next-generation technology to solve business challenges.

"In the past when we've attempted to address municipal challenges, IT was a bottleneck, not an enabler to success," says Claes. "It was impossible to put ideas into practice if it meant having to buy an additional physical server, due to cost and administrative procedures. With a virtual environment, however, it's easy to create an additional server immediately."

"As a result of the simplified scalability, we have been able to implement numerous projects where a dedicated server was required, such as a time registration system," he continues. "Previously this would not have been possible with a non-virtualized environment because we would not have been able to buy and maintain 20 servers. Now it's the other way round—the more virtual servers we implement, the greater the return from our new IT infrastructure. With the VNXe we have a net capacity of six terabytes. This gives us lots of room to grow so we'll definitely be able to continue working with this technology for a number of years."

CONTACT US

To learn more about 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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