

GREENER CLOUD COMPUTING

Belgium hosting company reduces power consumption by approximately 25 per cent with Dell PowerEdge Energy Smart servers



IT is changing. The old model where companies only developed their own IT infrastructure is being challenged by a new methodology – known as ‘cloud computing’ – where companies supply software or IT infrastructures as a service. Competition to supply these services is picking up and it’s important that suppliers have the right infrastructure to drive business and support them over the long term. This means finding solutions that are more power efficient, and easier to manage and scale.

SOLUTIONS:

- DATA CONSOLIDATION AND MANAGEMENT
- GREEN IT
- VIRTUALIZATION

Network Group

CUSTOMER PROFILE

COMPANY: Network Group Europe BVBA

INDUSTRY: Hosting Solutions

COUNTRY: Belgium

FOUNDED: 2007

EMPLOYEES: 12

WEBSITE: www.networkgroupeurope.com

CHALLENGE

Network Group Europe BVBA operates in an increasingly competitive hosting services market. It wanted to create a more energy efficient and easier to manage IT infrastructure to support major expansion plans over the coming years.

SOLUTION

The company rolled out Dell™ PowerEdge™ Energy Smart servers running virtualization software and backed by Dell EqualLogic virtualized storage technology. For day-to-day management, Network Group Europe BVBA also deployed Dell OpenManage™ Systems Management to simplify server control.

BENEFITS

Get IT Faster

- Virtualization software installed in factory saves deployment time
- New servers up and running in 15 minutes

Run IT Better

- Simplified storage management saves €200,000 a year
- Energy Smart servers reduce power consumption by approximately 25 per cent
- Dell services provide onsite support within four hours

Grow IT Smarter

- Virtualized scale-out storage makes growth easy
- Virtualized environment consolidates 24 servers



Network Group Europe BVBA, headquartered in Belgium, is a great example of how the market for software as a service (SaaS) and 'cloud computing' is evolving. The company is going from strength to strength and expanding its hosting services. As well as offering Microsoft® Exchange Server® 2007 for email services, Windows® SharePoint® Services for intranets, and Microsoft Dynamics® CRM 4.0 for customer management, the company plans to deliver Microsoft unified communications. The addition of this integrated communication technology signifies a major advance in its hosted solution offering. The technology is set to transform the way companies communicate, offering real-time presence, instant messenger (IM), video and web conferencing, and telephony via a desktop computer.

Johan Vansimpson, managing director of Network Group Europe BVBA and his team has the energy, technical expertise and determination to achieve their aims. The company also has a reputation for reliability and flexibility, which should stand it in good stead. But, despite their personnel drive and great standing among customers, future success also depends on the Network Group's IT infrastructure.

As it stood, there were a number of pain points concerning the management and rack space of the existing IT systems. Dedicating a single physical server for each service and using directly attached storage added time

and expense to managing the infrastructure. In some cases, it took up to four hours to provision a server, which limited the number of new services the IT team could deliver in a day. Having dedicated servers also meant the company needed an ever increasing amount of rack space to cope with the growing number of boxes. Says Vansimpson: "Rack space is increasingly difficult to find and expensive because of the demand for space in datacentres worldwide."



“USING VMWARE RUNNING ON DELL POWEREDGE 2950 SERVERS, WE LAUNCH A NEW APPLICATION IN 15 MINUTES WHEN BEFORE IT COULD TAKE US FOUR HOURS.”

Johan Vansimpson, managing director, Network Group Europe BVBA

HOW IT WORKS

HARDWARE

- Dell™ PowerEdge™ 2950 servers
- Dell EqualLogic PS5000XV iSCSI SAN array
- Dell EqualLogic PS5000E iSCSI SAN array

SOFTWARE

- Microsoft® Exchange Server® 2007 SP1
- Windows® SharePoint® Services
- Microsoft Dynamics® CRM 4.0
- VMware® ESX Server 3.5 virtualization software
- Dell OpenManage™ 5.4 Systems Management

SERVICES

- Dell ProSupport for IT
 - Mission Critical option

Another major pain point was energy consumption. Vansimpson saw his electricity bills increase by as much as 30 per cent in a month. It was in the company's interest to reduce consumption not just for the sake of greener IT, but to cut costs. He says: "The increases in our bills alone meant that unless we took action soon we wouldn't be making any money."

An infrastructure overhaul was needed. But the company was not completely happy with the incumbent IT solutions provider. "We felt the support services weren't very good," comments Vansimpson. So, Network Group Europe BVBA started talks with Dell on how it could meet the company's IT needs. It came about due to the recommendation

from Microsoft on using Dell™ PowerEdge™ servers to support a unified communications network and past experience of working with Dell. "We used Dell desktops and notebooks in the past and the build quality and support services had been excellent," says Vansimpson.

The design stages of the new environment moved quickly. Vansimpson chose to install third-generation Dell PowerEdge 2950s, which included the latest Intel® Xeon® quad-core processors.

“IN THE PAST, TECHNICIANS SPENT UP TO SIX HOURS A WEEK MANAGING THE DIRECTLY ATTACHED STORAGE SYSTEM. TODAY WITH A SIMPLIFIED IT SAN INFRASTRUCTURE BASED ON DELL EQUALLOGIC STORAGE, THEY NEVER TAKE MORE THAN THREE - SAVING US AROUND €200,000 A YEAR.”

Johan Vansimpsen, managing director,
Network Group Europe BVBA



From the beginning, the company had wanted to virtualize the environment to help streamline management, increase business agility and reduce power consumption. The big advantage of selecting the PowerEdge 2950s was that Dell integrated VMware® ESX Server 3.5 virtualization software at the factory, so Network Group Europe could have its virtualized infrastructure up and running fast.

For data storage, the company selected Dell EqualLogic internet SCSI (iSCSI) arrays. It purchased a PS5000XV array configured to offer 7.2 terabytes using sixteen 450 gigabyte serial attached SCSI (SAS) disk drives. The company also purchased a Dell EqualLogic PS5000E array configured in such a way that it delivers 16 TB of storage with 16 serial advanced technology attachment (SATA) disk drives. Microsoft recommended Dell's EqualLogic offering, and Vansimpsen was impressed with the capabilities, features and pricing of the storage area network (SAN). "All the snapshot technology is included in the price of the SAN," he says.

DELL PROVIDES ONSITE SUPPORT WITHIN FOUR HOURS

Network Group Europe BVBA carried out the implementation work itself. "The Dell servers and storage solution were delivered onsite and we got to work. It was all straightforward," says Vansimpsen. During the deployment, the company needed help with some minor server issues. "Thanks to Dell ProSupport for IT Mission Critical option we had a technician on site within four hours," comments Vansimpsen. "It showed that Dell delivers on its support promises."

Because Network Group's software services are mission critical to customers, it has to guarantee 99.999 per cent server uptime. Vansimpsen is confident the company will meet these demands with the help of ProSupport for IT. "We are IT experts, but sometimes a company needs expert-to-expert support when troubleshooting," he says. "With Dell ProSupport for IT, you speak to experts – not people reading from a call-centre script." Vansimpsen likes the fact that his IT team gains access to Dell IT training and certification and he gets a single point of contact for escalating enquiries with Dell.

SIMPLIFIED MANAGEMENT SAVES €200,000 A YEAR

Besides Dell equipment giving Network Group peace of mind when it comes to reliability, it has simplified IT management dramatically. "In the past, technicians spent up to six hours a week managing the directly attached storage system," comments Vansimpsen. "Today, with a simplified IT SAN infrastructure based on Dell EqualLogic storage, they never take more than three hours – saving us around €200,000 a year."

Vansimpsen likes that the EqualLogic system virtually runs itself and is incredibly easy to scale due to its virtualized scale-out architecture. This enables the IT team to dynamically grow the SAN with new arrays to meet demand while systems remain online. It simplifies expansion tremendously. "With the Dell EqualLogic system, if we want to increase our storage, we simply buy another unit and install it. We don't have to worry about migrating data or system configurations," says Vansimpsen.

Operating the Dell PowerEdge 2950 servers is just as simple as the SAN, according to Vansimpsen. He likes the quality of the materials used in the servers' construction and the way they are laid out internally, making them easy for technicians to use. The Dell OpenManage™ 5.4 Systems Management software that ships with Dell servers is also a major benefit. "Dell OpenManage is easy to install and simple to use. Our technicians manage the Dell server infrastructure using a single console that allows them to complete routine management tasks rapidly."

NEW SERVERS ARE UP AND RUNNING IN 15 MINUTES

Network Group has virtualized the vast majority of its server applications using VMware ESX Server, including Microsoft Exchange Server 2007, Microsoft Dynamics CRM 4.0, and Microsoft SQL Server 2005. It has reduced the number of physical servers in its infrastructure from 31 to seven Dell PowerEdge 2950 machines. What's more, because the environment is virtualized, new applications can be provisioned quickly. "Using VMware running on Dell PowerEdge 2950 servers, we launch a new application in 15 minutes when before it could take us four hours," says Vansimpsen.

The business benefits of this are significant. The company can respond to customer demands much more easily. "The secret of success in our industry is business agility. If a customer says he needs a new server up and running, we need to be able to do it fast. With our Dell server infrastructure and VMware we can respond to customers much quicker."

**ENERGY SMART SERVERS REDUCE
POWER CONSUMPTION BY
APPROXIMATELY 25 PER CENT**

With electricity prices rising, companies are becoming as concerned about the cost of powering a server as well as the performance of its CPU. Network Group was in this exact position before it installed the Dell infrastructure. The main benefit of the third-generation Dell PowerEdge 2950 servers is the fact they are Energy Smart, which means Dell has designed them to deliver maximum performance while consuming less power.

“As a result of our Dell PowerEdge Energy Smart servers we have reduced power

consumption by approximately 25 per cent across our IT infrastructure,” says Vansimpson. “What can I say? The business as a whole is more profitable and greener, ensuring that we achieve two major goals.”

For more information on this case study or to read additional case studies, go to www.dell.com/casestudies and www.dell.be

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