

RESPONDING FASTER TO CUSTOMERS

Dutch IT service provider can launch new servers and storage up to 75 per cent faster thanks to virtualization



IT service providers have seen competition increase as more companies achieve the highest levels of accreditation from software vendors such as Microsoft. In short, they need to find different ways of distinguishing themselves from competitors, other than their internal skills. The most successful providers are offering new levels of customer service, developing systems that enable them to respond to clients quicker and deliver projects fast.

SOLUTIONS:

- DATA MANAGEMENT AND CONSOLIDATION
- GREEN IT
- VIRTUALIZATION



CUSTOMER PROFILE

COMPANY: Info Support

INDUSTRY: Technology

COUNTRY: Netherlands

FOUNDED: 1986

EMPLOYEES: 250

WEBSITE: www.infosupport.com

CHALLENGE

Info Support wanted to respond faster to client requests by creating a development environment where new projects, complete with servers and storage, were up and running in a couple of hours.

SOLUTION

The company deployed the latest Dell blade and enclosure technology with a Dell™ EqualLogic™ storage area network (SAN) to help deliver a simplified and highly responsive development environment.

BENEFITS

Get IT Faster

- Blades, enclosure and iSCSI storage arrive in less than three weeks
- New virtualized server and storage launched up to 75 per cent faster

Run IT Better

- Servers consolidated by just over 60 per cent
- Six physical machines support around 200 virtualized servers
- Servers and server software managed using a single console

Grow IT Smarter

- Consolidated environment releases 23U of server space
- Snap-in scalability makes adding new equipment simple

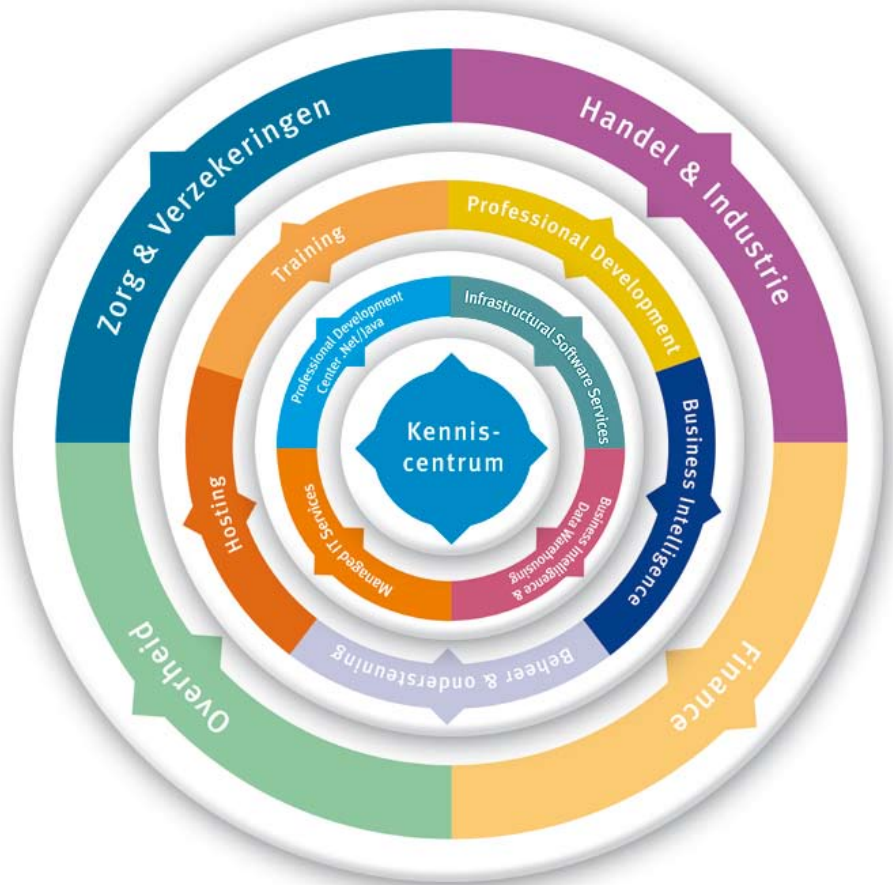


Info Support is a Microsoft® Gold Certified Partner and leading IT service provider in the Netherlands. As a Gold partner, the company offers the highest level of technical expertise in building solutions based on Microsoft software. But Info Support is not the only service provider with these kinds of qualifications working in the Netherlands. There are others with similar skills. However, Info Support is still attracting a growing list of clients, because the company responds to customers quickly and delivers an excellent level of service.

As expected of a Microsoft partner, Info Support uses the latest solutions such as Microsoft Windows Server® 2008. What's more, personnel work with development tools such as Microsoft Visual Studio® Team System 2008 Team Foundation Server. Virtualization software has also been a feature of the infrastructure for some time, with Microsoft® Hyper-V™ technology recently replacing Microsoft Virtual Server 2005.

With competition growing, Info Support wanted to maximise productivity among personnel and find new ways of working to ensure that projects were initiated quickly with less time and money spent on management. As part of this push, the company reviewed the IT hardware underpinning the main development environment. The aim was to simplify IT, increase flexibility and boost the speed of

server deployment. The company also hoped to curb the rise in energy consumption for powering and cooling machines, which was becoming increasingly expensive, not to mention environmentally unsound.



“WE HEARD GREAT THINGS ABOUT THE LATEST DELL POWEREDGE M600 BLADE SERVERS, THE DELL POWEREDGE M1000E BLADE ENCLOSURE AND NEW DELL EQUALLOGIC ISCSI ARRAYS. A COMBINATION OF THE THREE SEEMED IDEAL FOR SUPPORTING OUR DEVELOPERS.”

Willem Jan Vastenholt, head of IT, Info Support

HOW IT WORKS

HARDWARE

- Dell™ PowerEdge M600 blades with Intel® Xeon® quad-core processors
- Dell PowerEdge M1000e blade enclosure
- Dell EqualLogic PS5000E

SOFTWARE

- Microsoft® Windows Server® 2008
- Microsoft Hyper-V™
- Microsoft Visual Studio® Team System 2008 Team Foundation Server
- Microsoft System Center Operations Manager 2007
- Dell™ OpenManage™ Systems Management

SERVICES

- Dell ProSupport for IT*
 - Mission Critical option

Having standardised the development infrastructure on Dell™ PowerEdge™ servers, Info Support turned to IT solutions provider, Dell for an answer. Willem Jan Vastenholt, head of IT, at Info Support says: “We heard great things about the latest Dell PowerEdge M600 blade servers, the Dell PowerEdge M1000e blade enclosure and new Dell EqualLogic PS5000E iSCSI arrays. A combination of the three seemed ideal for driving our business and supporting our developers.” What made the blades particularly interesting was the fact they featured the latest, low voltage Intel® Xeon® quad-core processors, which can

help boost performance and reduce energy consumption. Likewise, the blade enclosures are designed to reduce complexity of management and help increase power efficiency across the whole datacentre. The Dell EqualLogic arrays also offered virtualized SAN and great scalability.

Vastenholt says: “By creating a flexible infrastructure based on Dell PowerEdge M600 blades, a Dell PowerEdge M1000e enclosure, attached to Dell EqualLogic iSCSI virtualised storage, our business could simplify IT while responding quicker to demands, increasing rates of customer satisfaction.”



“DELL POWEREDGE M600 BLADES INCLUDE LOW-VOLTAGE INTEL XEON PROCESSORS. WHEN WE COMPARED THE LATEST DELL BLADES WITH OTHER VENDOR OFFERINGS, WE FOUND THE M600S WERE SOME OF THE MOST ENERGY EFFICIENT ON THE MARKET.”

Willem Jan Vastenholt, head of IT, Info Support

From here things moved quickly. Vastenholt and his colleagues prepared a design for the new-look environment and contacted Dell. “Info Support has a great relationship with our Dell account manager,” says Vastenholt. “We told him what we needed and the new infrastructure arrived on-site within three weeks.” With their IT knowledge and experience, Vastenholt and his team were able to remove some existing Dell PowerEdge 2950 and 2850 servers and directly attached storage (DAS) and install the blades, enclosure and EqualLogic SAN in a matter of days. “Dell systems are rigorously tested before leaving the factory, so we had the blade and EqualLogic infrastructure up and running successfully within a week,” comments Vastenholt.

NEW VIRTUALIZED SERVERS ARE DEPLOYED 75 PER CENT FASTER

Developers at Info Support can now launch a new virtualized server and partition the Dell EqualLogic SAN for dedicated storage quickly. “In the past, we needed perhaps eight hours to configure a new server along with storage. But now, thanks to our PowerEdge M600 blade environment with EqualLogic iSCSI SAN attached, it takes just a couple of hours,” says Vastenholt.

The advantages this offers the company are significant. Once developers get the green light for a new project, they can get started on the work almost immediately. “Our Dell blade environment with EqualLogic storage ensures that we can be more responsive to customers and deliver projects faster than ever before,” Vastenholt comments.

The head of IT doesn’t underestimate what this means for Info Support in a competitive market. “Our Dell blade infrastructure gives us the necessary business agility for today’s challenging business environment. We can respond to customers’ needs quicker, delivering a better level of service.”

CONSOLIDATION CUTS SERVER NUMBERS BY OVER 60 PER CENT

Info Support has consolidated hardware by rolling out this new simplified IT infrastructure. In the past, it had removed a number of machines by installing Dell PowerEdge 2950 servers running Virtual Server 2005. But by moving to the PowerEdge M600 blade servers with an M1000e modular enclosure, consolidation has reached a new level. “We consolidated 16 2U PowerEdge rack servers down to six PowerEdge M600 blades sitting in an M1000e enclosure,” says Vastenholt. “These blades, which are running on a Windows Server 2008 and Hyper-V platform, are supporting around 200 virtualized servers at the moment.”

The company has fitted the blades’ enclosure, Dell EqualLogic boxes and network switches in just 19U of space – leaving it 23U of space empty in a 42U rack server cabinet. “By consolidating our development environment using PowerEdge M600 blades and enclosure, we can continue to scale without running out of space in our datacentre, saving us the cost of an additional rack,” says Vastenholt.

GREAT ENERGY EFFICIENCY HERALDS COST SAVINGS AND GREEN IT

Because Dell’s latest IT solutions include Energy Smart technology offerings,

Info Support expects costs of powering and cooling the datacentre to fall. “The first energy bills since deploying the new infrastructure are yet to arrive,” says Vastenholt, “but we expect them to be lower.”

He continues: “Dell PowerEdge M600 blades include low-voltage Intel Xeon processors. When we compared the latest Dell blades with other vendor offerings, we found the M600s were some of the most energy efficient on the market.”

In addition, each M1000e enclosure contains ultra-efficient power supplies and dynamic power-efficient fans that help optimise airflow, keeping the chassis cool.

FLEXIBLE STORAGE WITH LOW TOTAL COST OF OWNERSHIP

Info Support can predict IT spending more accurately as a result of installing the Dell EqualLogic SAN. One major advantage of Dell EqualLogic storage is that it is available for one price, with no additional licensing fees. Says Vastenholt: “The Dell EqualLogic PS5000E comes with management features built-in, saving us money on software licences.”

Vastenholt was impressed by the speed of the Dell EqualLogic solution. “The multi-path I/Os with the Dell EqualLogic iSCSI SAN makes the device really fast,” says the head of IT. “We can be running 200 virtual images at any one time, but there isn’t any noticeable delay from the Dell EqualLogic device.”

He says the situation is different from the days of DAS. "With our DAS set up, we often noticed a drop off in speed because the machines couldn't cope with the multiple I/Os."

He adds: "Our developers are very happy with the performance of the Dell EqualLogic SAN. Due to its speed, the device is helping them maximise their productivity."

REDUCED MANAGEMENT COMPLEXITY DELIVERS NEW EFFICIENCIES

The snap-in scalability of Dell servers and storage solutions now helps to deliver new efficiencies across Vastenholt's team. Because managing the blade servers is so simple, each developer can launch a virtualized server and set up a new partition on the SAN themselves without the need for any IT support. Says Vastenholt: "Soon after the SAN was installed, one of our guys sent a short email to everyone explaining how to set up a server and partition. That was all we needed. Working with the Dell EqualLogic PS5000E SAN day to day is so simple, we don't need to rely on experts to help store our data."

Vastenholt uses Dell™ OpenManage™ 5.0 to control the blades. Using a Dell Management Pack, he has integrated OpenManage with Microsoft System Center Operations Manager 2007, which oversees the Microsoft environment. Combined, the

two management systems monitor the state of the underlying hardware and enterprise software through a single console. "Our new development environment is really simple to control owing to Dell OpenManage and Microsoft System Center Operations Manager because they help us automate routine management tasks so we can get on with more strategic, higher-value work."

DELL SUPPORT SERVICES DELIVER RAPID RESPONSE

The company has selected the Dell ProSupport for IT Mission Critical option* with four-hour onsite support across the whole development environment. Comments Vastenholt: "We've always been impressed with Dell support services since we first started buying Dell products. The Dell ProSupport for IT Mission Critical option provides peace of mind – we know that a Dell expert can be here in hours if need be."

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

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