Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Eshgro is a source of inspiration for cloud-based services

HPE CloudAgile provides a flexible, risk-free solution for Dutch service provider

Industry
Cloud Services

Objective
Provide customers with a centralised cloud computing platform based on the latest technology and a sound business model

Approach
Considered infrastructure vendors who could help build the appropriate infrastructure

IT matters
- Supports a 50 per cent increase in customers with only a 12 per cent increase in power requirements
- Provides a powerful and scalable infrastructure that can grow to match commercial needs
- Delivers high levels of availability and capacity, reducing unscheduled downtime

Business matters
- Uses 'pay-as-you-go' model to reduce end-user costs by 50 per cent
- Saves service providers up to 30 per cent in energy consumption, due to the use of the new generation of processors
- Shortens time-to-value for innovative solutions
- Enables organisations to innovate the services they provide and penetrate new markets
- Delivers joint go-to-market sales and marketing backed by the HPE reputation

Predictable costs and service assurance

To control expenditure, many small to medium-sized businesses are choosing the predictable costs and services provided by IT outsourcing. This puts pressure on service providers who do not have the knowledge or cash to build cloud platforms. Dutch company Eshgro is taking advantage of the 'pay as you grow' Flexible Capacity Service, part of the Hewlett Packard Enterprise CloudAgile offering.

"HPE offers solutions that are not available anywhere else. The secure HPE cloud infrastructure assures us of a regular technology refresh, making it easy for us to innovate without having to commit major investments in advance."

– Guido Wouters, Chief Operating Officer, Eshgro

Challenge

Need for a cloud platform

In the current economic climate, many small to medium-sized businesses (SMB) are turning to cloud service providers to reduce the cost of running their own IT environments.

Eshgro was formed in the Netherlands in 1998 as an SMB software developer then progressed to provide Software-as-a-Service. It needed an infrastructure to support this and looked at building its own cloud. However, the up-front cost was too much, the technology refresh was too fast, and Eshgro did not have the necessary experience of running an infrastructure. It needed a strategic partner and, since it was already an HPE customer, it turned to HPE for a solution.

Eshgro now offers more than 500 cloud-based applications as well as services like Global Desktop, Disaster Recovery and Dossierbox. These enable businesses to simplify their IT and get a handle on their expenditure. They are used by thousands of professionals in sectors that include production and commercial services.

The collective turnover of these clients exceeds €1 billion and they use financial, ERP, CRM, logistics, and other business-critical applications that all run on Eshgro's cloud.

Solution

Flexibility is the key

Eshgro become the very first HPE CloudAgile partner. HPE CloudAgile is a joint go-to-market arrangement based on strategic partnerships that work down through the business hierarchy so that even comparatively small companies can take advantage of certified HPE cloud hosting. HPE partnered with Eshgro to build a cloud platform. The companies take part in joint marketing and the whole system is based on the HPE Flexible Capacity Service, which runs on a pay-per-use model.

The converged HPE technologies that make up this particular cloud platform include HPE ProLiant BL460c Gen8 server blades running some 1,500 virtual machines through Microsoft® Hyper-V. They also include HPE Virtual Connect Flex-10 10 GB Ethernet modules, HPE EVA, MSA and HPE 3PAR StoreServ storage systems and HPE networking switches. Dealing with around 1 Petabyte of data, the HPE cloud infrastructure is located at Eshgro's Tier 4 data centres, offering the highest of the four levels of data centre security. With a production site near Arnhem and a co-location site 30 km away, the environment has also achieved SAS 70 Type II certification for its security standards.

Benefits

Powerful collaborations

Having gained accolades such as 'Cool vendor in the European cloud market 2013' (Gartner), Eshgro has grown to be a leading provider of cloud services, due mainly to the flexible HPE CloudAgile business model.

The company's success has resulted in a significant growth in its client base, as well as the number of solutions it can offer. In order to keep the management of these cloud solutions on track, but keep the same number of staff, Eshgro has also entered into a partnership with Inovativ, a specialist system integrator using Microsoft System Center.

Guido Wouters, chief operating officer at Eshgro says; "our collaborations with HPE, Microsoft and Inovativ offer us the support we need to be able to stay one step ahead of other cloud service providers. The HPE pay-as-you-go model means we only pay for what we use so that we do not have to make hefty investments in advance. The same applies to the Microsoft software. This affords us the flexibility to change pace if we have to and lets us offer our clients equipment and services as their needs change."

The partnerships also enable Eshgro to keep pace with rapid technological developments without time-consuming training sessions and courses.

"A regular technology refresh is hugely important in our sector," says Wouters.

"This gives us constant access to the latest equipment and software. In turn, it improves speed, reliability, and availability and lets us enter into strict service level agreements with our clients."

Smarter products

"The result of our collaboration is that we can offer smarter products to our existing clients, quickly offer a service to new clients, and penetrate different markets. At this point, around 60 clients are already buying 3,000 workplaces and associated applications from us via the cloud. We do all of this from data centres in the Netherlands, so that our clients retain 100 per cent control over their data."

"It means that we can relieve our clients of all their concerns, leaving them free to concentrate on innovation and giving them the assurance of a 24x7 service based on an enterprise-level infrastructure at a price that even an SMB can afford."

Eshgro estimates that using the HPE cloud saves 20 to 30 per cent compared to buying and running its own infrastructure. Also, using HPE blade servers enables more cores per rack which means that while the number of customers has increased by 50 per cent, power and cooling costs have gone up by just 12 per cent. The company also saves 15 per cent of IT staff time, releasing them for enhanced client services instead of routine management.

Customer solution at a glance

Hardware
- HPE ProLiant BL460c Gen8 server blades
- HPE BladeSystem c7000 enclosures
- HPE Virtual Connect Flex-10
- HPE EVA 4400
- HPE EVA 8400
- HPE 3PAR StoreServ storage systems
- HPE MSA 2000
- HPE 9500 Switch series

Software
- HPE Virtual Connect Enterprise Manager
- HPE Insight Control
- VMware vSphere 4
- Microsoft® Hyper-V Server 2008 R2
- Microsoft Dynamic Data Center
- Microsoft System Center
- Microsoft Application Virtualization
- Citrix XenServer

HPE services
- HPE Flexible Capacity Service
- HPE installation services

Our solution partners

Microsoft

inovativ

"We have a large number of clients in the commercial services sector, including notaries, lawyers, and accountants. To meet their demands, we have an ISAE 3402 certificate – an international standard indicating that we comply with strict legislative requirements."

– Guido Wouters, Chief Operating Officer, Eshgro

The Flexible Capacity Service arrangement means that Eshgro does not have to buy for the future. Also, time-to-value for new Eshgro clients is a hundredfold faster. It can set up a client with virtual servers and storage within hours where it previously needed three to four weeks. It is also estimated that Eshgro clients save up to 50 per cent over five years by using the cloud rather than operating their own IT infrastructures and they benefit from the security, compliancy, certification, and efficient change management of using the HPE cloud. Eshgro is also innovating and developing new services. Wouters explains; "we are about to start offering our products via a partner channel. Thanks to our partnership with HPE, which is in effect an extension of our sales model, we can achieve rapid growth. This represents the added value of working alongside market leaders like HPE and Microsoft."

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