NBK Banque Privée (NBK BP), Part of NBK Wealth, Automates Swiss Datacentre Operations for Rapid Business Responsiveness

About NBK (Suisse) Banque Privée, part of NBK Wealth, Switzerland

Industry: Wealth management
Geo: Based in Switzerland and supporting global clients
Website: www.nbkwealth.com

Products:
- AHV Virtualization

- Nutanix Cloud Infrastructure (NCI)

Ready to get Hands-On?

(**Take a Test Drive**)

The National Bank of Kuwait-owned wealth management firm is transforming IT operations… and all without a large administration team

Business need

A renewed IT infrastructure with greater compute and storage capacity and on-demand scalability. This needed to be delivered with maximum management ease of use to support simplified administration, given NBK BP's small specialist IT team. Optimal uptime and high security levels were also needed so that the business could manage high-volume transactions and focus on its most important tasks without worrying about replication, system availability, or repetitive tasks.

Key Results

Automation

Datacentre maintenance tasks are now automated and policy-driven, liberating staff to focus on more creative and high-level work. Downtime has been minimised and IT can better serve strategic business goals. Disaster recovery processes have been reduced by over an hour from 90 minutes to just 15 minutes.

Ease of use

A single pane of glass to view all operations has made controlling IT a point-and-click exercise. This has resulted in 20 annual working days on managing downtime during upgrades to be saved.

Policy-based protection

Leaders can set policies for resource management, recovery processes and security tasks, then associate those policies to servers. NBK Wealth now needs an average of 0.2 full-time employees compared to 1.5 previously for management operations.

> **We can be more responsive to business needs because we can scale easily, deploy and deliver resources quickly. Without even being technical, staff can know what's happening in real time. We are ready to support any business requirements.**
>
> **Karim Taha**
> IS Executive Director, NBK Banque Privée

Challenge

Based in Switzerland, NBK BP provides wealth management services that aims to provide clients with lasting solutions. It is part of the National Bank of Kuwait (NBK) Group, one of the largest financial institutions in the Middle East with almost $119bn in managed assets for the 2023 financial year.

Its values are encapsulated in the tag "Always There", denoting a commitment to being a long-term, trusted partner that is willing to go above and beyond baseline commitments for its customers. These include high-net-worth individuals, families and institutions. Services provided include asset management, private banking, and trust and planning.

However, NBK Banque Privée needed to match its scale with a modernised IT approach.

"We had a Microsoft HyperV-based virtualisation infrastructure and, historically, we had used IBM Blade Center as our initial platform but scalability was not linear," said Karim Taha, at NBK BP.

"We were heading towards 'end-of-life' status for our equipment and we saw risks of obsolete parts and hardware failures. Moreover, we had so many basic, tedious tasks relating to managing these virtualised servers. Replication was very sensitive and service levels dropping, we had risks of single points of failure and whenever we had high rates of incoming fresh data, we had full storage disks bringing servers down. So, we had a lot of operations taking too much of our time and it was not very efficient."

Solution

Changes needed to be made.

"We wanted to have a system that really let us focus on the most important tasks such as deploying new servers easily and not worrying too much about how to replicate servers or their availability," Karim said.

"We met one of our partners and he suggested we move to Nutanix. In our region we were one of the 'early birds' implementing in the French-speaking Swiss region so we had little peer feedback, but we gained a lot of confidence seeing demonstrations and from attending bootcamps.

"We signed a purchase agreement in 2017 and deployed in 2018 with lots of support from Nutanix and partners, including our hardware partner Lenovo and reseller SPIE Switzerland. What we like about Nutanix is that it's mostly policy-driven, so once we set policies, we simply associate our servers and workloads, and operations are more efficient as a result.

"Another reason we were attracted was that we are a small team.. So, we wanted easier operations for our colleagues: if someone wants to deploy or recover a server, it should be easy and not take up too many resources.

"We wanted something everyone could operate. Everything is pre-configured and ready to go, which saves time and effort. Obviously, configuration and ensuring high availability requires Nutanix knowledge but once you've done that work, operations become very easy for colleagues."

Outcomes

Karim says he has been impressed as every operational efficiency goal has been met.

"Reliability and automation have been great and we were even surprised at just how automated Nutanix can make IT operations. We have one unique interface to operate everything and policy-based protection is an outstanding advantage. If there's more need for storage we just add a cluster to the nodes and we're done."

"There is an objective to grow the business and the primary thing for us is to reduce operational risk to control everything in production. The big goal is to avoid unavailability of critical systems that impact operations and also, potentially, our image with our clients. Being a Swiss bank, we are controlled by local banking authorities and have to comply with a lot of laws and regulations.

"RTO [Recovery Time Objective, or how long it takes to restore systems to the previous state after an incident or outage] is one of the key metrics and in our last test we have enhanced the RTO by almost an hour and 30 minutes to just 15 minutes. Nutanix central automation tools automate all the IP addressing and small technical changes we used to do manually are done automatically. These are very clear to operators and change management is recorded in the system, so we can audit dynamically and know precisely all the steps of how we

manage recovery of operations.

Next Steps

NBK BP's current mission is five-fold: to expand its client base, enhance its digital capabilities, increase its product offerings, strengthen its risk management framework, and foster a culture of innovation. One major way forward is to focus more on cloud activities.

"Obviously, the trend is to the cloud and everyone is facing the same trend but in our sector that migration and associated data are very, very sensitive. We believe that using Nutanix can be very helpful in that transition, allowing for hybrid environments that are simple to operate and yet reliable. The strategy for the next years is to make sure we have all the technology measures and infrastructure to allow for a transition to the cloud.

"We have a lot of technical requirements to address before moving, however. Today, we have two types of clusters: for servers and for VDIs. The latter will always be on premises but we are trying to see if there are more sophisticated options and if the Nutanix solution will help us to have an easy-to-manage, modern, low-administration VDI.

"For the server side, we will very probably be hybrid with some workloads moving to the cloud and the rest remaining on premises."

NBK BP had never used VMware so, Karim said, "we didn't suffer from the recent surprises". Instead, he praises the quality of Nutanix's support, and says that should reassure peers pondering a switch to the company.

"There are always issues in IT so the quality of support is one thing I would mention to people considering moving to Nutanix. One of the main elements is that migration is easy for workloads and new tools like Nutanix Move [for cross-hypervisor VM migrations] make it even easier. I would say to people who are wavering, 'Don't worry, you will have good support with all the necessary software and tools to cross platforms and all the coverage needed for compliance with data sovereignty and residency'."

More broadly, enabled by Nutanix, NBK BP want to instill a culture of innovation.

"We can be more responsive to business needs because we can scale easily, deploy quickly and deliver necessary resources quickly. It's all driven by business needs and we are ready to support any business requirements."