

Swiss Laboratory Tests Positive for Nutanix

Viollier AG Resolves Scalability Issues with Nutanix Enterprise Cloud and AHV Hypervisor While Looking Forward to Agile DevOps with Nutanix Calm Automation

INDUSTRY

Healthcare

BENEFITS

- Rapid migration of SAP workloads to more scalable platform, doubling processing power
- Enhanced hypervisor flexibility and resilience with Nutanix AHV hypervisor
- Simplified management of all physical and virtual resources through Prism Central management console
- Rapid, reliable and consistent automation of DevOps processes using Nutanix Calm

SOLUTION

- Nutanix Enterprise Cloud hosted on HPE ProLiant hardware
- Prism management plane
- AHV hypervisor
- Nutanix Calm
- Nutanix Karbon

APPLICATIONS

- SAP ERP
- SAP CRM
- SAP BW
- SAP PO
- Microsoft SQL Server
- Citrix Virtual Apps and Desktops

BUSINESS NEED

With over 700 employees working in laboratories across Switzerland, Viollier AG is at the forefront when it comes to diagnostic health testing and screening. Rapid growth in customer demand was, however, pushing the limits of the company's existing IT infrastructure. That meant either a significant upgrade or an alternative solution in order for the company to maintain its high levels of service at scale whilst also delivering on ambitious long term digital transformation plans.

“The Nutanix solution has more than lived up to our expectations. Providing the on-demand scalability needed to cope with growing business demand while also enabling us to bring forward plans for DevOps and the adoption of containers, Kubernetes and other cloud native technologies in pursuit of more agile and flexible IT moving forward.”

– Ilan Stark, Project Leader, Viollier AG

CHALLENGE

As the leading Swiss laboratory, Viollier AG is at the front line of medical testing and screening, also playing a key role during the recent Coronavirus pandemic. Behind the scenes, however, it has the same IT needs and concerns as any rapidly growing mid-size enterprise. Among them ambitious plans for future growth, including adoption of a more agile DevOps approach to the development and support of core SAP and other applications. Plans which would require significant changes to its data centre infrastructure to realise, as Ilan Stark, Project Leader at Viollier explains.

“Although fundamentally sound, our existing infrastructure was showing its age,” he commented. “Hypervisor dependency issues, in particular, were holding us back, and it was becoming clear that changes were needed if we were to cope better with growing demand and take advantage of cloud-native technologies, such as containers and Kubernetes, crucial to our plans going forward.”

SOLUTION

With help from specialist partner AXACOM AG, Stark and his team reviewed the available options and decided that the best way forward would be to switch to a hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI) solution hosted on its preferred HPE server platform. Several products were evaluated and, following a successful proof of concept trial, the Nutanix Enterprise Cloud chosen based on the completeness of the solution.

Suitably sized clusters were installed in each of the company’s two on-premise data centres to both balance workloads and, using the built-in replication tools, allow for immediate failover in the event of a system failure. A third, disaster recovery, cluster was also configured off-site, adding yet more resilience to the solution.

As part of the migration, the team also opted to switch to Nutanix AHV from the Citrix hypervisor used previously. This not only resolved the scalability limitations imposed by the Citrix software but, as Stark commented, made the end result a lot more reliable and easier to manage.

“We went from an infrastructure that needed time and a lot of manual input to scale,” he said, “to one that can be scaled on demand, quickly and, thanks to the automation tools in Nutanix Calm, with minimal oversight.”

Although specified as a means of automating processes associated with the company’s push towards DevOps, Nutanix Calm has also delivered other benefits.

“We weren’t planning to migrate our SAP workloads until the second phase of the migration,” said Stark. “But Calm made it so easy we were able to move all 38 SAP VMs straight away. More than that we were able to re-build each VM, upgrade to the latest SUSE operating system and optimise the environment as part of the process, while still freeing time to start virtualising older physical SAP servers as well.”

CUSTOMER OUTCOME

In the first phase of the project, Viollier has migrated more than 200 VMs to their Nutanix clusters with immediate benefits in terms of performance. Initial tests on the SAP servers, for example, have shown processing times more than halved in some instances.

Other, mostly Linux servers, have similarly been migrated including those hosting v-consult, a business-critical application that digitises and automates lab sampling processes before delivering test results direct to medical practitioners to reduce both errors and turnaround time.

Stark and his team have also been able to press ahead with plans for DevOps, equipping the development team with more capable Linux virtual desktops while also building Kubernetes clusters for the deployments of both test and quality/production containers.

“The Nutanix solution gives us the scalability we needed but, just as importantly, the confidence to move ahead with our DevOps plans,” Stark commented. “Calm, in particular, has given us the confidence of being able to build environments rapidly and reliably every time, rather than have to do everything manually and waste time sorting out the mistakes that, inevitably, result.”

NEXT STEPS

In the second phase of the migration the Viollier team will move other Windows workloads to the Nutanix and HPE infrastructure, including virtual Windows desktops, Windows productivity tools and Microsoft SQL Server databases. All new applications are now deployed on the Nutanix enterprise cloud by default and the company will shortly be decommissioning the legacy SAN infrastructure.

Beyond that, the company is soon to start evaluation of Nutanix Era as a means of deploying and managing its Microsoft SQL and other databases. Steps have also been taken to begin a proof of concept trial of Nutanix Karbon, an enterprise-grade solution that simplifies provisioning, operation and lifecycle management of Kubernetes. Initially this will be limited to on-premise container deployment, but a move towards a hybrid cloud is being considered and, here too, Nutanix tools and technologies are expected to play a significant role.



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