The City of Gainesville, Georgia Invests In the Future

Nutanix Enterprise Cloud improves application performance, simplifies infrastructure management, and makes all city services more responsive.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

The City of Gainesville, Georgia upgraded its datacenter from 3-tier infrastructure to Nutanix Enterprise Cloud. The simplified management and higher performance has improved all city services. And by eliminating its expensive vSphere hypervisor licensing fees, the City of Gainesville has been able to procure additional Nutanix nodes for its geographically separate DR site, improving their ability to rebound from an emergency and reducing backup windows by 25%.

> "Nutanix Enterprise Cloud is making it much easier to meet the IT needs of our city. My only regret is that I wish we had implemented it sooner."
>
> – Jonathan Reich, IT Director, City of Gainesville, Georgia

INDUSTRY
City Government

CHALLENGES
- Aging 3-tier infrastructure was due for an upgrade
- Wanted to eliminate expensive hypervisor licensing fees
- Needed to simplify infrastructure management

SOLUTION
Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Platform
- Acropolis Software, including built-in hypervisor, AHV
- Nutanix Files
- Prism management plane

Applications
- ERP, financial, and HR applications
- CRM application for the City Water Authority
- Public safety, police, and fire department services

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CHALLENGE

Gainesville is a is a prosperous agricultural city located about an hour north of Atlanta, Georgia, with approximately 45,000 full-time residents. Because of its large number of poultry processing plants, it is often called the Poultry Capital of the World. "We have the same IT problems as most rural communities, including limited bandwidth and a shortage of skilled technology professionals," noted Jonathan Reich, the city's IT director. "I joined the IT team in 2016, and at that point we were just maintaining our aging infrastructure. We had a 3-tier environment with separate CPUs, networking, and storage systems, and we were due for an upgrade."

The City of Gainesville's IT team is responsible for managing all city applications and services. "Our police department relies on a set of bandwidth-intensive record management tools," said Reich. "They store a lot of crime scene photos, Visio drawings, and other large evidence files. Our previous infrastructure was very slow, and it was hard to identify where the issues were. The application performance issues were starting to affect our local law enforcement teams' ability to solve cases, and making our department 'the bad guy' when we weren't able to diagnose the root cause of any IT issues."

SOLUTION

Reich first heard about Nutanix while attending an EMC Dell World conference in 2017. "I visited the Nutanix booth and really got a shock," admitted Reich. "I was in the middle of budgeting for the next fiscal year, and we were planning on just upgrading our five VM hosts. The new infrastructure was going to cost us a lot of money, but I wasn't really thrilled with how things were going. I was really impressed with Nutanix's integrated fail-safe system, and all of the logic that happens when the Nutanix software manages all of the hyperconverged hardware. So we decided to move forward and replace all of our legacy hosts with Nutanix Enterprise Cloud infrastructure."

The City of Gainesville employs a team of nine IT professionals, and currently runs about 120 VMs. "My systems team is championing the migration from the virtual machines and physical servers that were running all of the file storage over to Nutanix," Reich said. "75% of our VMs have already been migrated, and we expect to move the remaining by the end of this year."

CUSTOMER OUTCOME

Improving Performance for All City Workloads

The City of Gainesville is now running all of its ERP, financial, and HR applications on Nutanix. The IT team also manages a large CRM application for the City Water Authority, along with all public safety, police, and fire department IT services. "Everything is running much faster and more reliably on Nutanix," said Reich. "Although our end users haven't called to say everything is running better since we moved to Nutanix, at least they aren't calling us with issues anymore. No news is always good news in IT!"

Using Nutanix Files

The City of Gainesville is also moving from Windows File Services (WFS) to Nutanix Files. Nutanix Files is a software-defined, scale-out file storage solution that improves storage services by providing high availability, massive scale, simplified self-service management, self-tuning and self-healing. "We have moved about 30% of our 70TB of files over using Nutanix Files, and have already obtained a 15% savings."

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Moving from vSphere to AHV

The City of Gainesville also migrated from VMware vSphere to Nutanix AHV this year. "One of the biggest benefits we obtained in the transition to the Nutanix hypervisor was the elimination of the vSphere licensing fees," said Reich. "vSphere is a great tool, but AHV does everything we need it to do and it's free. That's an irresistible combination for any IT organization."

Improving DR

The extra budget freed up by eliminating the VMware licensing fees has made it possible for the City of Gainesville to improve disaster recovery. "Before Nutanix, we didn't have 'true' DR capabilities, we just stored a backup copy of our data in a remote location," explained Reich. "We couldn't immediately go online during an emergency, since there was no compute at the remote site. We were able to purchase several redundant Nutanix blocks, and placed them in our geographically separate data center. We can now run our VMs from that site with no reconfiguring — we just connect to the DR site, fire it up, and we're back in business. As a result of moving to Nutanix, we have improved our ability to rebound from an emergency and have reduced our backup windows by 25%."

Simplifying Management

It used to require three IT people to manage all network and system-related tasks with the 3-tier infrastructure. With Nutanix, the city only needs two admins. "Prism is enabling our IT team to be more efficient, and support calls have been dramatically lower on Nutanix compared to our 3-tier platform," said Reich. "As a result, we have been able to assign that extra FTE to more strategic tasks."

Upgrades are also easier on Nutanix. "It is really nice to have Nutanix do everything for you," said Reich. "You can take a node offline during an upgrade, and it doesn't affect users. It manages all of the resources for you, and then moves everything back. I have been really impressed with Nutanix's non-disruptive upgrades."

Great Support

"Nutanix support has been even better than I expected," noted Reich. "That's one of the biggest benefits of hyperconverged infrastructure. We used to have to deal with three vendors when we had any issues. Having a single vendor stack with very reliable equipment has really streamlined support."

NEXT STEPS

The City of Gainesville is now getting ready to run a POC for its upcoming VDI project. "Virtual desktops will reduce the time it takes to resolve issues," stated Reich. "VDI will also eliminate the need to re-image PCs and perform end point management. That has been a big drain on our resources. With VDI on Nutanix, our users will get a better desktop experience and we won't have to worry about our PC infrastructure anymore."

"Our mayor and city council have been very supportive about our use of new technologies," concluded Reich. "The IT benefits we are producing support the mission of the city, and without our leadership to do that, we would not be in such a great place. Nutanix Enterprise Cloud is making it much easier to meet the IT needs of our city. My only regret is that we I wish we had implemented it sooner."

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