

Fairway Independent Mortgage Builds Rock Solid IT Foundation on Nutanix

Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Provides the Ease of Management, Scalability, and High Availability Needed to Deliver a World-Class Customer Experience

BUSINESS BENEFITS

By moving from Vblock to Nutanix Enterprise Cloud, Fairway Independent Mortgage was able to improve virtual desktop performance and simplify infrastructure management. With faster access to key applications, the mortgage company improved employee productivity, enhanced the customer experience, and ultimately grew the business.

“Nutanix Enterprise Cloud is the technology foundation that’s enabling us to survive and thrive in the highly competitive mortgage industry.”

- Veronica Petersen, VP of IT Infrastructure,
Fairway Independent Mortgage

INDUSTRY

Financial Services

SOLUTION

Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Platform

- Acropolis Software, including built-in hypervisor, AHV
- VMware vSphere

APPLICATIONS

- Citrix XenDesktop and XenApp
- Microsoft Exchange, Microsoft SQL Server

BENEFITS

- Reduced desktop login time from minutes to <30 seconds, improving employee productivity and the customer experience
- Eliminated the need to hire extra IT personnel to manage the Citrix environment
- Shortened the time to deploy new VMs from 15 minutes to less than a minute, increasing developer productivity

CHALLENGE

Fairway Independent Mortgage is the largest privately held mortgage company in the United States. “A huge portion of our success is due to our great customer service, and our ‘speed to response’ is one of the core metrics that’s very important to our CEO. In order to deliver on our service goals, we need to be able to provide the best, fastest, and easiest-to-use applications to all of our staff,” said Veronica Petersen, Fairway’s VP of IT infrastructure.

Fairway originally launched its Citrix XenApp and XenDesktop service on Dell EMC Vblock hardware in 2014. Nearly all of Fairway’s 7,000 employees use Citrix daily, including the company’s corporate staff and several hundred loan originators. “At the time we deployed Vblock, we only had two IT admins supporting the entire infrastructure. It was a huge task that required us to work weekends to keep up with all of the hands-on management tasks and time-consuming upgrades that come with the Vblock platform.”

Fairway Mortgage is growing very quickly. Since they started the Citrix project four years ago, they’ve expanded by over 250 percent. “Although the Citrix deployment on Vblock was designed to support 1,500 users, it could only handle a few hundred at a time,” Petersen recalled. “We were facing a forklift upgrade on the entire environment. That’s when we decided it was time to look for a better solution for our Citrix deployment.”

SOLUTION

Fairway Mortgage started the search for a better solution for the virtual desktops in 2017. “We looked at several options, but only Nutanix Enterprise Cloud could provide the management simplicity and one-click upgrades that would eliminate the need to hire extra IT staff for our VDI environment,” Petersen said.

Fairway enlisted the help of a Nutanix sales engineer for the initial deployment. “There were a lot of gotchas and pieces we needed to do correctly and in the right order to deploy our legacy systems. It was much easier with Nutanix—it only took three days to deploy eight servers,” Petersen reported. “The process was so simple that we can now deploy 20 servers by ourselves in the same amount of time.”

In addition to moving Citrix to Nutanix, Fairway has now migrated its entire production environment over to the Enterprise Cloud platform, including the company’s corporate MS Exchange application, SQL databases, and all high-end servers.

CUSTOMER OUTCOME

Higher Performance with a Smaller Footprint

“The Vblock implementation that was supposed to support 1,500 users filled up two racks,” noted Jarod Hallmark, Fairway Mortgage’s infrastructure manager. “In contrast, the Nutanix infrastructure barely fills half a rack. Citrix is also running much faster now on Nutanix. We’re seeing much lower latencies, since the storage is closer to the application with hyperconverged infrastructure.”

Reduced Management Time and Faster Provisioning

Fairway Mortgage is using Prism to manage the Nutanix environment. “We now have one pane of glass that provides visibility into the entire environment, instead of having to look at multiple interfaces with the legacy infrastructure,” explained Petersen. “There’s no way that we could manage a traditional 3-tier IT environment with just two engineers. It’s not only possible, it’s easy with Nutanix.”

“It takes less than a minute to deploy a virtual machine from a template with Nutanix,” said Hallmark. “With traditional infrastructure, it takes five to 15 minutes, depending on the underlying storage. With the ability to provision storage quickly, we’re able to deliver new applications much faster to the business.”

Easier Troubleshooting

“Nutanix makes it much easier to narrow down the source of any performance issues,” added Petersen. “You don’t have to hunt for separate storage blade problems, then look for server hardware issues, and finally check for software glitches to find a problem. We don’t have the luxury of having a separate operations team that spends all day focusing on system and application performance; we only have an engineering team. With the centralized management we get with Prism, our engineers can spend their time creating new applications, not just monitoring existing ones.”

Faster Desktop Logins

“In order for our loan officers to get their jobs done efficiently, they can’t be slowed down by technical challenges,” noted Petersen. “We can’t have the two-minute logins we were experiencing with Vblock. With Nutanix, our employees can access their desktops in less than 30 seconds. This enables us to provide a better user experience for our employees, which ultimately drives customer loyalty and the ongoing success of our organization.”

Simple Scaling

Scaling is also very easy with Nutanix, according to Petersen. “We know exactly how Nutanix is going to perform and what our footprint will look like. We know we can buy this many servers, that will support this many users, that will need this much power, networking, and rack space. Scaling is much easier when you have just one type of hardware and software to procure.”

“With Nutanix, it’s easy to install and deliver new capacity,” added Hallmark. “You don’t have to buy an entire rack and build out a 3-tier architecture; it’s basically a plug and play solution. After we put an order in to Nutanix, we can have an entire cluster available to end users in less than a week.”

Top-Notch Nutanix Support

“Nutanix Support is one of the top—if not the top—support organization I have ever worked with, and I’ve worked with lots of vendors over the years,” Hallmark admitted. “They are very responsive and friendly, they help me see new ways to do things, and they push me to stay on top of everything. It’s a top-notch team that enables us to manage our entire stack in one place.”

NEXT STEPS

Fairway Mortgage currently has a small deployment of AHV, with everything else on vSphere 6.5. “We are looking at expanding our use of the Nutanix hypervisor, specifically for its build provisioning piece so our developers can spin up their own VMs,” Hallmark said. “AHV is a less complicated solution to manage than vSphere, since you can look at everything within Prism. It will also be great to eliminate the licensing fees that come with the VMware hypervisor.”

“Providing great customer service is the most important factor in our success,” concluded Petersen. “Nutanix gives us the ability to quickly deploy applications to our sales force that make closing loans even faster and easier. Nutanix Enterprise Cloud is the technology foundation that’s enabling us to survive and thrive in the highly competitive mortgage industry.”



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