

Nutanix All-Flash Systems
Meet Aggressive Launch Dead-
line for Mission-Critical Gaming
Management Application



Great Canadian Gaming Company Places a Winning Bet on Nutanix

CHALLENGE

In October of 2016, GCGC decided to rollout Bally's new Gaming Management System (GMS) to three of its casinos. "Planning was well under way when a change cut the time to deploy the new systems in half," said Robin Killeen, GCGC's director of technical development. "We had to decide on a hardware platform for the deployment, have the gear shipped, installed, and running in less than eight weeks."

A gaming management system is the application that controls all of the game logic and playability on the casino floor. "Our GMS is a fairly complicated environment with 45 different servers," explained Mark Poitras, IT systems architect at GCGC. "It isn't a small task to find enough hardware and horsepower to pull all that together when you're saddled with such a short delivery deadline."

SOLUTION

Poitras first encountered Nutanix while attending VMWorld last year. "I was looking for a solution that was easier to operate than our existing 3-tier architecture," he said. "It took months to perform any OS or firmware upgrades on our current storage systems. Plus, we had to schedule outages with the business, which is extremely difficult since many of our properties are operational 24x7. We needed a solution that we could easily upgrade on the fly, with little to no downtime."

GCGC purchased 14 Nutanix all-flash systems for the GMS project, placing seven at the company's hosted Q9 Datacenter for production workloads and the other seven at a separate facility for DR. "We had to meet all of Bally's system performance requirements for the new gaming software," explained Killeen. "That's why we chose the all-flash systems for our production environment. We also placed the same Nutanix systems at our secondary datacenter, so we can failover to that site in case of a disaster." In addition to the 14 systems used for production and DR, GCGC purchased several Nutanix 1000-series systems that are being used as DMZ and local site servers at many of its casino properties.

"We start losing money immediately if our gaming management system goes offline. We are confident running our mission-critical applications on Nutanix".

– Robin Killeen, Director of
Technical Development, GCGC

RESULTS

A Fast Deployment

The Nutanix hardware deployment went very quickly, according to Poitras. "A Nutanix engineer came on site to assist with the installation, and we had both the primary and secondary site up in about three days. Deploying over a dozen new systems at multiple sites with a three-tier architecture would've taken a lot more time and been far more error-prone in my opinion. With Nutanix, it was a much simpler process."

Running Mission-Critical Workloads only on Nutanix

GCGC is still using traditional 3-tier systems for its payroll and accounting applications, but its mission-critical systems are on Nutanix. "Our business systems are important to the company of course, but if they're unavailable for a few hours, the impact is minor compared to the financial loss we'd experience if our gaming systems went down," explained Killeen. "We are confident running our mission-critical applications on Nutanix."



Switching to AHV

GCGC is currently using the VMware hypervisor for some of its corporate workloads. “We recently switched from VMware to the Nutanix hypervisor at several of our resort properties that were running VMware on Dell virtual hosts,” noted Killeen. “The migration from vSphere to AHV has been seamless, with very little downtime. Our experience with AHV has been excellent, and the ability to reduce our VMware licensing costs has been an added benefit.”

Simpler Management

“Management is a lot simpler on Nutanix,” Poitras said. “You just build the containers, add the VMs, and that’s about it. You don’t have to worry about managing multiple storage protocols, including NFS and iSCSI, building the LUNs, and all of the overhead that comes with 3-tier systems.”

“Nutanix is a ‘set it and forget it’ environment,” added Killeen. “We still need a dedicated storage admin for our 3-tier storage products, but our Nutanix systems can be managed by our systems admin. That makes life much simpler for me as a hiring manager, since it is much easier and cheaper to find qualified sys admins than storage specialists. Plus, our storage administrator doesn’t have to work after hours anymore, since anyone on our team can manage the Nutanix systems while he’s is away.”

Non-disruptive Upgrades

“Our current 3-tier storage upgrades were very time-consuming and complicated,” Poitras said. “We had to plan everything months in advance, go through the steps one by one, and do a dry run before starting the upgrade. Then, when we were ready to go, our storage admin would get called away to focus on other storage-related tasks and we’d have to start the planning process all over again. As a result, it often took months to complete the upgrades. With Nutanix, we just open Prism Central, login to the web interface of that cluster, and click to see if there is an available upgrade. If there is, we just download it, click ‘install’, and we’re done.”

NEXT STEPS

“When it’s time for our next infrastructure refresh, Nutanix will definitely be at the table for the discussion,” admitted Poitras. “We plan to keep all of our enterprise workloads in-house, and Nutanix will certainly be one of the front runners for those enterprise workloads.”

“Moving to Nutanix has taken a huge burden off our shoulders,” concluded Killeen. “All of the ‘scariness’ of having a critical system patch come down the pipe and worrying that the upgrade will either fail or be disruptive has been eliminated. With Nutanix, we can proceed with upgrades with a high degree of confidence—eliminating risk and months of up-front planning needed with our traditional platforms. Nutanix has been a great choice for our mission-critical systems, as well as for our IT team.”



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COMPANY

Great Canadian Gaming Corporation (GCGC) is a multi-jurisdictional gaming, entertainment, and hospitality operator with 23 properties located throughout Canada and Washington State.

INDUSTRY

Entertainment

BUSINESS NEEDS

Needed high performance infrastructure for new business-critical gaming management platform with very short launch timeline.

SOLUTION

- › Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Platform
- › Acropolis Data Services
- › AHV hypervisor
- › Prism management
- › Citrix XenDesktop

BENEFITS

- › Obtained high performing storage for business-critical GMS application
- › Met short project deployment timeline
- › Simplified ongoing management, reducing the need for a storage specialist
- › Reduced the risk and time needed for infrastructure upgrades
- › Eliminated downtime due to scheduled outages with Nutanix Disaster Recovery

Nutanix makes infrastructure invisible, elevating IT to focus on the applications and services that power their business. The Nutanix enterprise cloud platform leverages web-scale engineering and consumer-grade design to natively converge compute, virtualization and storage into a resilient, software-defined solution with rich machine intelligence. The result is predictable performance, cloud-like infrastructure consumption, robust security, and seamless application mobility for a broad range of enterprise applications. Learn more at www.nutanix.com or follow us on [Twitter@nutanix](https://twitter.com/nutanix).

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