



Hybrid Cloud An Open-And-Shut Case For Irish Lawyers Body

The Bar Of Ireland Chooses Nutanix Hybrid Cloud To Deliver Value For Money To Its Members With No Compromises

In order to both maintain and further develop the IT services provided to its membership, The Bar of Ireland was faced with upgrading or replacing its end-of-life infrastructure. Unlike a commercial company, however, The Bar is totally funded by the barristers it serves, making it imperative to find a solution able to meet a strict operational budget without compromising on factors such as performance, scalability, or ease of management. A hybrid cloud, based on the Nutanix Cloud Platform and its AHV hypervisor, promised just that and has more than delivered on those aims.

An additional strategic and operational imperative was security and the integrity of the infrastructure considering the sensitive nature of barristers work, The push to online court business and interaction due to the pandemic also place a focus on issue of security.

“Although we have moved some applications into the cloud, it doesn’t work for every workload. Especially for a non-profit like us, unable to absorb the high access charges and usage costs some applications can generate. The Nutanix hybrid cloud approach has solved that dilemma by empowering us to understand where our applications are best hosted – on-premise or in the cloud – to get the outcomes we want at a price we can afford.”

– John Kane – Director of ICT, The Bar of Ireland

INDUSTRY

Legal

BENEFITS

- Fixed operational costs and enhanced agility through being able to seamlessly migrate workloads between on-prem and public cloud platforms
- Lower management overheads through centralised management of all physical and virtual resources from a single interface
- Greater resilience with integrated replication and disaster recovery tools
- Cloud-native ready infrastructure to accommodate future development plans

SOLUTION

Nutanix Cloud Platform
AHV hypervisor

APPLICATIONS

- File & Print, Active Directory and other network services
- SQL Databases
- Membership system
- Finance and HR systems
- Library system
- Extranet

CHALLENGE

As with many organisations, the time had come for the Bar of Ireland to consider the future of its end-of-life IT infrastructure. Should it upgrade or, perhaps, replace what it had? And if replacement was the answer, should it stick with the same legacy architecture or something more modern, like a hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI) or, maybe wholesale migration to the public cloud?

A further complication was the way the Bar of Ireland is financed, on a non-profit basis for a membership comprising professional barristers working in the Irish legal system. A complication which, ultimately, was to push Director of ICT, John Kane firmly towards taking a hybrid cloud approach, as he explains:

“What we wanted was the on-demand scalability, flexibility and other advantages of the cloud but, as a non-profit having to work within a strict operational budget we didn’t see any of the public cloud platforms as a good fit. We needed cost certainty, which led us to think that a mix of HCI and a hybrid cloud was the best way forward.”

SOLUTION

Having decided on a hybrid cloud approach, the next step was to invite tenders from interested vendors. From these Nutanix was eventually selected to provide the on-premise solution based not just on the capabilities of its products but, as Kane recalls, “for its market leadership and vision of hybrid cloud as a preferred IT model going forward.”

Two clusters were specified and subsequently installed by Nutanix partner and hybrid cloud specialist Leaf. One of these was located at the main Law Library in Dublin with a second at a separate site for data replication, failover and disaster recovery. Prism Central was specified to provide central management of the two sites and Veeam Backup & Recovery added to take backups to an encrypted public cloud repository.

And the hypervisor came free

With the Nutanix clusters in place it was then just a matter of migrating the workloads, with Kane and the team opting to switch from VMware to the Nutanix AHV hypervisor as part of that process.

“There were no technical reasons why we shouldn’t use AHV and real financial gains and other benefits to be had,” he explains. “Not only does it save us thousands every year in hypervisor licensing, we can also manage physical and virtual resources together from the same console and get support from a single vendor no matter what the issue. Indeed, apart from having to learn the AHV ropes, we have yet to find any downsides.”

CUSTOMER OUTCOMES

From a user standpoint, it’s business as usual with very little appearing to have changed. However, according to Kane that’s good, reflecting on the total lack of disruption during migration plus no downtime since the Nutanix cloud went live.

Behind the scenes, however, the benefits have been many and varied, not least being able to stretch the project budget much further than originally expected, as he explains:

“Before starting the project we took the decision to move our on-premise SharePoint system online. That meant fewer workloads to migrate, more headroom for growth once the project was complete and scope to do more things, like really enhance our disaster recovery and backup capabilities.”

It also meant that the migration of 60+ VMs would take just three weeks with a short break in the middle over Christmas enabling it to revitalise the services on offer almost immediately.

Seamless flexibility

As well as obvious benefits, such as on-demand scalability, easy management and fixed operational costs, there are less obvious benefits, too. Such as reduced rack space and lower power and cooling overheads plus far less support time required to keep the infrastructure working as it should.

The most prized outcome, however, is the ability to migrate workloads between on-premise and public cloud platforms and do so seamlessly, as Kane describes.

“The cloud is still a big unknown, particularly from a cost perspective, so the big plus with Nutanix is the ability to seamlessly move workloads to the cloud from our on-premise servers and back again. With no need to make changes or reconfigure the apps involved this lets us quickly understand the technological and cost implications of each platform and deploy new apps without locking into long term commitments.”

NEXT STEPS

While it's still early days for the new infrastructure, The Bar of Ireland team are keen to push ahead and take full advantage of what the hybrid cloud approach has to offer.

“We know that we're only just scratching the surface of what our Nutanix hybrid cloud can do,” commented Kane, “but we're already looking at moving other apps out to public cloud platforms and balancing workloads more effectively. We've also been working with our library team to deliver new and improved services, something the Nutanix Cloud Platform has made much simpler already with a lot more to follow as this and other projects move forward.”

PARTNER

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