

Hosting Provider Implements Agile Infrastructure



Unified Computing System and unified fabric reduce data center costs and create new revenue stream for Basefarm.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Basefarm

Industry: Information Technology

Location: Sweden

Number of employees: 200

Challenge

- Improve operational efficiency
- Reduce power and cooling costs
- Support more flexible business model

Solution

- Data center solution more responsive to business demands

Results

- Reduced time spent on data center administration by about two-thirds
- Reduced operating costs and carbon footprint
- Created new revenue stream using different service model

Challenge

Founded in 2000, Basefarm is one of Northern Europe's leading providers of web and applications hosting services. It delivers business-critical operational services to media, public sector, and other organizations with high-quality requirements that use the Internet as an important customer channel. Basefarm specializes in providing services with high traffic and complexity, such as portals, online publications, video streaming, search engines, and e-commerce solutions. With operations in Norway, Sweden, and the Netherlands, it employs 200 staff and has four data centers, two in Sweden and two in Norway.

As a relatively small organization delivering a number of substantial projects on behalf of its clients, Basefarm was looking for ways to improve its operational efficiency. In particular, it sought to make the best possible use of a relatively small resource of 165 technical staff. In an increasingly competitive environment, the company needed to deliver more with the same number of people, by improving customer service, speeding up deployments and changes, and reducing the burden of network administration.

Reducing power consumption in its data centers was another top priority. Basefarm is an environmentally-conscious organization that actively seeks to reduce its carbon footprint and wider environmental impact. In Sweden, excess heat from its data centers is used to provide domestic heating for the surrounding communities. Furthermore, power and cooling represented a significant operational cost.

"Electricity is always getting more expensive, so it's an ongoing battle to keep that cost down," says Stefan Månsby, chief business development officer for Basefarm Sweden. "That means building efficient data centers using efficient components, and investigating any new technologies which could provide those much-needed percentage reductions in power consumption."

Basefarm also wanted to broaden its product offering to include more flexible, cloud-based services. It was already providing Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS), Platform as a Service (PaaS), and Software as a Service (SaaS), and wished to develop this side of its business. In particular, the company recognized a market opportunity to offer temporary server access on a pay-as-you-go basis to support customers' short-term projects and marketing campaigns. There was also a demand for buffer server capacity, particularly from media clients whose websites were prone to spikes in traffic as a result of news stories or television schedules. As well as representing a potential new revenue stream for Basefarm, this business model would respond to customer demand, mitigating the risk of customers seeking an alternative provider to support their short-term projects.



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Stefan Månsby
Chief Business Development Officer
Basefarm Sweden

Solution

Basefarm was already interested in the [Cisco Unified Computing System™ \(UCS\)](#), which at the time had just been launched, having identified UCS as a technology that would help to optimize data center operations and service delivery. Basefarm first experienced Cisco® UCS during a visit to a new customer, the Swedish-owned creator of the Voddler online video-on-demand service.

“Cisco introduced us to Voddler, who proudly showed us what they had achieved with the UCS platform,” says Månsby. “In return we demonstrated what we could do with our data centers. It was the beginning of a discussion which ultimately led to Voddler asking us to take over management of their application platform, including the Cisco UCS, to take things to the next level.”

Basefarm has now built two UCS environments, which are “aware” of each other, but remain separate for the purpose of providing double redundancy. Cisco UCS streamlines data center resources, scales service delivery, and reduces the number of devices requiring setup, management, power, cooling, and cabling. As a next-generation data center platform, UCS is designed to:

- Unite computing, networking, storage access, and virtualization into a cohesive system
- Integrate a low latency, lossless 10 Gb Ethernet unified network fabric with enterprise-class, x86-architecture servers.

One of the most important advantages of the platform’s [unified fabric](#) is that it enables companies to increase the number of servers and virtual machines, without increasing the complexity involved in provisioning or managing those servers. Cisco UCS also supports the [Cisco VN-Link](#) technology, which helps organizations with a VMware vSphere environment, such as Basefarm, to manage their virtual machines more effectively.

Although Basefarm’s cloud platform is based on VMware, the company uses Red Hat Enterprise Virtualization for the services that it delivers to Voddler. Cisco UCS also supports Microsoft virtualization solutions, giving Basefarm the ability to offer customers exactly what they want at no additional cost. “We see UCS as a new virtualization engine,” says Månsby. “Because it supports Microsoft, Red Hat, and VMware, there is a broad set of options, and that level of flexibility is a great advantage to us.”

Results

For Basefarm, the primary business benefit of adopting the UCS platform is simplified data center administration. [Cisco UCS Manager](#) software provides unified, centralized, embedded management of all software and hardware components, across multiple chassis and potentially thousands of virtual machines. The crucial feature of Cisco UCS Manager is its use of service profiles to provision server resources, enabling infrastructure to be provisioned in minutes instead of days.

“What Cisco has done with server profiles is brilliant,” says Månsby. “You can’t have a server online without storage and network, so it makes perfect sense to package all three administrative functions into a single interface. It’s all about resource efficiency: if server, storage, and network are three different phases, then you spend three times as long on a deployment or change as you would using Cisco UCS. And time is money.”

Furthermore, Cisco UCS Manager supports process automation through a Web Services interface, enabling Basefarm to carry out routine administration tasks, such as initializing additional storage for a customer or activating a server, without



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Sales Director
Basefarm Sweden

the need for human intervention. In addition to saving time, automation reduces the risk of human error, improving the customer experience and enabling Basefarm to introduce further guarantees of network availability to its service-level agreements. This, in turn, increases customers' confidence and satisfaction with the whole service offering.

By incorporating unified fabric and integrated, embedded management, the Cisco UCS architecture enables the chassis to have fewer physical components and no independent management or blade switches, requiring less cabling and rack space. Components have been designed to minimize power consumption, and efficient front-to-back airflow leads to a reduction in cooling requirements. Cisco UCS is contributing to Basefarm's environmental commitment to operate as efficiently as possible, reducing its carbon footprint, and providing savings in data center power and cooling costs.

By improving workforce productivity and energy efficiency, Basefarm's deployment of Cisco UCS demonstrates the benefits of the [Cisco Data Center Business Advantage](#). This architectural framework for dynamic networked organizations, which includes a portfolio of practical solutions such as Cisco UCS, is helping Basefarm to create services faster, improve profitability, and reduce the risk of implementing new business models.

“The Cisco UCS platform has created a new revenue stream for us,” says Håkan Palmback, sales director at Basefarm. “It enables services to be provisioned more quickly and cost effectively, meaning we can offer customers both virtual and physical servers for short-term projects of, say, three or six months. And because UCS is so easily integrated with the VMware administration tools we already use, we get further efficiencies in terms of billing and accounting.”

For More Information

For more information about the Cisco Unified Computing System, visit: www.cisco.com/go/unifiedcomputing

To find out more about unified fabric, go to: www.cisco.com/go/unifiedfabric

Product List

Data Center

- Cisco Unified Computing System
- Cisco UCS 6100 Series Fabric Interconnects
- Cisco UCS 5100 Series Blade Server Chassis
- Cisco UCS B200 Blade Servers



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