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Software Provider Cuts Operating Costs by Standardizing Data Centers

AudienceView Ticketing reduces operating costs by 25 percent with migration to Cisco Unified Computing System.

Executive Summary

Customer Name: AudienceView Ticketing

Industry: Entertainment

Location: Toronto, Canada

Number of Employees: 110

Challenge
- Focus more resources on driving revenue, less on managing data center
- Streamline data center operations by standardizing with single vendor
- Scale to meet demands of becoming global SaaS provider

Solution
- Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS) provides scalable, high-performance server platform
- Cisco UCS C-Series Rack-Mount Servers support wide range of workloads
- Integration between UCS, EMC, and VMware create convenient turnkey solution

Results
- Slashed operating costs by 25 percent, licensing costs by 50 percent
- Reduced server provisioning from day and a half to 60 minutes
- Scaled dynamically to accommodate rapid shifts in global customer demand

Challenge

AudienceView Ticketing provides a white-label, web-based ticketing solution to theatres, arenas, stadiums, and arts organizations around the globe. Based in Toronto, the company boasts over 140 clients, who represent more than 500 venues in Europe, Asia, Australia, and the Americas. The AudienceView system allows clients to choose between a hosted software as a service (SaaS) solution or an enterprise license with unlimited users. Either way, clients can take greater control of their business by deploying an innovative, flexible, customer-focused ticketing solution at a competitive price.

AudienceView maintains one data center in Toronto and another in the United Kingdom. Until very recently, the company relied on multiple vendors to supply its data center components, leading to a great deal of incompatibility and inefficiency. "When I started at AudienceView in 2010, I immediately saw a need to standardize in our data centers," says Gopi Balasingam, vice president of operations. "We were mixing and matching vendors' equipment, and there was very little harmony as a result. We had persistent issues with firmware upgrades, and whenever we needed support, some of our vendors would simply blame other vendors for any problems that occurred."

Balasingam began looking for a single vendor to standardize and virtualize data center operations. "We're in the business of driving revenue," he says. "We don't want to focus all of our efforts on trying to run a data center. And as we move more aggressively into becoming a SaaS provider, we need to be able to scale more nimbly than ever. So I pushed to take our infrastructure to the next level, which meant finding a compact, efficient, turnkey solution."

Solution

After comprehensive due diligence, which included a thorough review of various offerings, AudienceView chose the Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS™). "Whenever you add more equipment to your data center, you draw more power, which results in higher operating costs," says Balasingam. "That's where Cisco UCS stood out against the competition. It's a tightly integrated stack, from the network to the computing nodes to the storage solution. It requires less peripheral hardware to get the system running, and that translates into a substantial cost savings from an operational standpoint."

AudienceView's data centers now run on Cisco UCS, with storage on the EMC VNX 5500 Series and virtualization on the VMware vSphere Hypervisor. The company uses Cisco UCS B440 Blade Servers to run nearly 25 databases on Microsoft SQL Server 2008. Furthermore, AudienceView's turnkey ticketing application runs entirely on 70 Cisco C460 M2 and C210 M1 Rack-Mount Servers, with plans to move both corporate IT operations and the development environment onto the C-Series as well.

"Cisco, EMC, and VMware have developed such a close partnership, and their products are extremely well integrated," says Balasingam. "Together they were able to offer, in effect, the turnkey solution I was looking for. Eventually we hope to bring all of our databases onto the C-Series servers because the Cisco UCS memory extenders make it possible for us to have a much more consolidated platform across the board. This system simply offers us the whole package."

Results

With a standardized, fully integrated data center solution in place, AudienceView is well equipped for rapid global expansion. "Our main goal as an organization is growth," says Balasingam. "Now we have a standard building block for provisioning our data centers as we grow. The Cisco UCS environment accelerates our time-to-market significantly. We used to spend up to a day and a half provisioning a new server. Now we can do that in 60 minutes. That will translate into a huge savings as we open up new data centers in the Asia-Pacific region."

Balasingam had hoped that AudienceView's new cloud computing environment would slash operating costs. He was not disappointed. "Within months, we achieved nearly a 25 percent reduction in operating costs, because our environment simply performs more efficiently," he says. "We've also seen licensing savings from consolidating our database workloads onto C-Series servers. I'm estimating that we've saved close to 50 percent on that front alone."

A consolidated, virtualized UCS environment offers further benefits in terms of disaster recovery and business continuity. "My team doesn't need to learn three or four different systems; they can look at a single view for our entire global operation," says Balasingam. "If the U.K. data center gets oversaturated for whatever reason, we can start offloading to our Toronto data center instantly. If a server goes down, we can dynamically redistribute the load to any available server. It's essentially an autonomous, self-healing system."

AudienceView's streamlined, high-performance infrastructure enables the company to scale rapidly as customers' needs change. That gives the company a greater competitive advantage than ever. "We run close to 50 million ticketing transactions per year, so scale is key," says Balasingam. "Now that we can provision our environment on demand, we're

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able to summon enormous computing power in almost no time at all. We don't need to reserve capacity that we'll never use. In short, we can drastically minimize wasted time and resources while responding much more quickly to customers' needs."

Next Steps
With the deployment of Cisco UCS nearly complete, Balasingam's next step is to evaluate and refine AudienceView's infrastructure. "We did all of the initial work ourselves, and I'm very happy with the results," he says. "But just to make sure that we're running optimally, I've asked Cisco Services to perform a site audit and provide us with some recommendations based on industry best practices. With their expertise, I'm sure we can make a great deployment even better."

For More Information
To find out more about Cisco Unified Computing, visit: www.cisco.com/go/ucs.

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