Auto Company Improves Business Continuity and Cuts Costs

Cisco UCS platform helps Colmobil support new SAP software version on virtual machines while enhancing data center agility

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Colmobil Corporation

Industry: Automotive

Location: Israel

Number of Employees: 990

Challenge
- Improve business continuity capability
- Increase system availability to help ensure prime position in country's automotive supply chain
- Enhance business flexibility while reducing costs

Solution
- Business continuity solution based on Cisco UCS servers and switching, operating in active-active mode across twin data centers

Results
- 50 percent less cost and improved ROI compared to competing solutions
- Time to recovery accelerated by 90 percent, with application performance soaring by 30 percent
- Savings of 70 percent on cabling, 30 percent on power, and 20 percent on hardware

Challenge

As Israel's largest motor vehicle importer and distributor, Colmobil Group forms a vital link in the country's auto industry supply chain. It's also the sole distributor of Mercedez-Benz, Hyundai and Mitsubishi brands in Israel. As well as new and used cars, it trades in servicing, leasing, finance, insurance, and spare parts, which it retails to other distributors and sells direct to its own customers.

The company, therefore, needs reliable back end systems to maintain profitability; if one of its trade customers cannot get needed spare parts due to a systems failure, Colmobil loses the order. At the same time, the business is increasingly dependent on technology for matters that range from supporting in-car maintenance and diagnostic systems to promoting the business via social networks.

Gil Katz, chief information officer at Colmobil, says: "These factors created a growing need for us to have IT systems that would be highly available and perform well right around the clock."

However, the company faced challenges. Its server estate, consisting of a mix of blades and rack-mounted servers, was becoming outdated and increasingly susceptible to failures, as well as incurring high support costs. Colmobil also lacked a backup data center, which meant any outages would leave it unable to deliver any services whatsoever. "At this point," says Katz, "we hatched a strategy to virtualize everything and split the data center across two sites. This would also enable us to allocate new server resources quickly and easily."

The idea was to run critical applications and services in a primary center with non-critical systems hosted at a secondary site, which could also be relied upon for disaster recovery (DR). At the same time, virtualization would be raised from 60 to 95 percent. That capability meant that, if the primary data center was affected by an outage, the non-critical systems in the DR site could be shut down, and the critical services could be launched there without having to reinstall or reconfigure servers.

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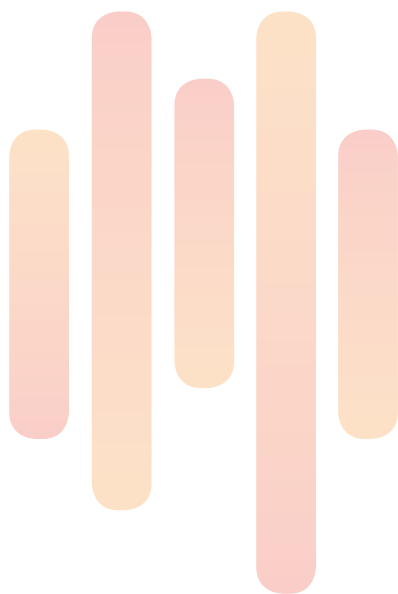
Gil Katz
Chief Information Officer
Colmobil Corporation

The trigger event came when Colmobil had to upgrade its operating systems to support a new SAP version. Concerned that existing servers would not be up to the task, the company started looking for a new data center technology platform.

Solution

After help from Cisco with demonstrations, training days, and return on investment (ROI) analyses, the company chose Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS®) because of its superior virtualization capabilities and centralized management. "No other architecture comes anywhere near matching the flexibility, agility, and enhanced resource utilization that Cisco UCS technology confers," Katz says, "while the Cisco solution also gave us the best ROI."

Working with the We! Consulting Group, a leading Israeli systems integrator, Colmobil replaced its old technologies with Cisco® blade servers and data center networking technology. We! planned, designed, and installed the technology at the Colmobil primary data center and at a new physically-separate facility at the company's HQ.

Colmobil has implemented 38 Cisco UCS B200 M2 Series Blade Servers and four UCS 6120XP Series 20-Port Fabric Interconnects, along with NetApp FAS3240 and IBM System Storage N6240 storage infrastructure.

Each data center has a Cisco MDS 9000 Series Multilayer Switch and twin Cisco Catalyst® 4500 Series Switches equipped with 1Gbps uplinks, providing full redundancy and cross connectivity between the centers. The servers, which come with Intel® Xeon® Processor 5600 chips, are virtualized using VMware.

This new platform supports the Colmobil upgraded SAP ERP system along with a range of Microsoft applications including Active Directory 2003, Exchange 2007, SharePoint 2007, and SQL Server 2005 and 2008. Colmobil was the first company in Israel to deploy SAP on UCS.

Results

Cisco unified data center architecture has helped Colmobil cost effectively solve its business continuity challenges. "We created a disaster recovery solution that was 40 to 50 percent less expensive than the next best solution," says Katz.

The data centers are arranged in an active-active configuration with storage replicated continuously between the two sites, so servers can be transitioned across instantly in the event of a failure.

Furthermore, UCS is delivering a range of additional benefits. For example, cabling costs have fallen by 70 percent, and power consumption has dropped 30 percent. Application performance has improved by between 20 and 30 percent, while hardware costs and time for new server provisioning have both fallen by 20 percent.

Thanks to UCS, Colmobil has improved its data center time to recovery by around 90 percent. Katz says: "The business has better server infrastructure reliability and improved recoverability from failures and potential disasters, while our IT team now benefits from centralized management and quick provisioning." That adds up to a reduced administrative burden, while Cisco support is still there when needed. "Cisco support is very professional and courteous," adds Katz.

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Gil Katz
Chief Information Officer
Colmobil Corporation

For More Information

To learn more about the Cisco architectures and solutions featured in this case study please go to:
www.cisco.com/go/datacenter
www.cisco.com/go/ucs

Product List

Data Center Solutions
- Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS)
  - Cisco UCS B200 M2 Series Blade Servers
  - Cisco UCS 6120XP Series Fabric Interconnects

Routing and Switching
- Cisco MDS 9000 Series Multilayer Switches
- Cisco Catalyst 4500 Series Switches

Processors
- Intel Xeon Processor 5600

Applications
- VMware
- SAP
- Microsoft Active Directory 2003
- Microsoft Exchange 2007
- Microsoft SharePoint 2007
- Microsoft SQL Server 2005 and 2008

Storage
- NetApp FAS3240
- IBM System Storage N6240

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