

Hosting Firm Delivers Big Performance Gains to Customers



Executive Summary

Customer Name: Secure-24

Industry: Managed hosting and cloud services

Location: Southfield, Michigan

Number of Employees: 250

Challenge:

- Meet customer demand for hosting high-performance, business-critical applications
- Provide reliable, high-availability environment at lowest possible cost
- Offer flexible pricing in increasingly competitive market

Solution:

- Cisco UCS platform significantly improves performance of virtualized applications
- Cisco Nexus 1000V Switches provide end-to-end control and transparency
- Cisco Nexus 5000 Series Switches reduce cabling and power demands

Results:

- Extended life of data centers by 35 percent
- Lowered amount of network cabling by 70 percent
- Increased number of virtual machines per blade by 30 percent

Secure-24 utilizes Cisco data center solutions to achieve lower-cost business model while providing better performance.

Challenge

Founded in 2001, Secure-24 is a premier provider of critical applications hosting services, including enterprise resources planning (ERP) hosting, private-cloud hosting, and disaster recovery. An Oracle Platinum Partner, its Oracle application hosting practice extends across the entire Oracle application portfolio. Based in Southfield, Michigan, Secure-24 has a data center footprint that includes three facilities in Michigan, and one each in Nebraska and Arizona. It also has agreements with international partners to support its global customers.

Over the past decade, demand for application hosting services has grown exponentially. Not only that, but customers have also been clamoring for reliable partners to host increasingly higher-performance, business-critical applications, including financial and business intelligence software. Always looking to invest in its technology growth, Secure-24 made addressing these requirements a top strategic priority.

“We’re delivering large enterprise applications, like Oracle E-Business Suite and PeopleSoft, to our customers in a private cloud model,” says James White, senior solutions architect for Secure-24. “These applications are vital to the daily operations of our customers’ businesses, so of course they demand a high degree of availability and performance.”

In addition, Secure-24 wanted to reduce operating costs and provide lower-cost service models to its customers. “Cost is one of the main factors that companies will look at when they’re vetting potential hosting providers,” White says. “For us, staying ahead of the competition means delivering services as cost effectively as possible.”

To meet these escalating demands, Secure-24 needed to know that its data centers were capable of providing the high availability and high performance that its enterprise customers required at exceedingly flexible and competitive rates.

“Our clients want the lowest-cost solution but need the highest availability. It sounds a little counterintuitive, but with the Cisco UCS platform, we’re able to deliver that high performance and still yield cost savings.”

– James White
Senior Solutions Architect
Secure-24

Solution

From the start, Secure-24 was interested in deploying Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS™) across all of its five data centers. However, because so much was at stake, the firm went through 18 months of proof-of-concept testing to help ensure that applications, including Oracle E-Business Suite, Oracle Business Intelligence, Microsoft SharePoint, JD Edwards, PeopleSoft, and Hyperion, performed well on the new infrastructure. According to White, the results of the testing phase were “tremendous.” “We saw a significant performance increase over the previous platform on both bare metal and virtualized delivery,” he adds.

Today, three of Secure-24’s five data centers run on a platform built with Cisco® UCS B-Series Blade Servers, in addition to Cisco Nexus® 1000V and 5000 Series Switches, the Cisco Catalyst® 6509 virtual switching system (VSS), and Cisco UCS 5100 Series Blade Server Chasses.

Secure-24 also has a large SAP practice serving mid-market and large enterprises with global operations. According to Len Landale, Secure-24’s director of ERP applications, Cisco solutions provide key benefits that the company can pass through to its customers. “Our Cisco infrastructure is flexible, scalable, and highly available,” he says. “That means we can deploy SAP instances quickly and deliver superior performance, which is exactly what customers want.”

With these Cisco data center solutions in place, Secure-24 can continue to deliver highly secure, virtualized, multitenant services that meet the firm’s rigorous standards for availability and compliance. “Early on, many people were skeptical, because they thought UCS wasn’t Cisco’s core business,” says White. “But I argued, and it proved true, that Cisco is the network platform of the world.”



Results

After implementing Cisco data center solutions, Secure-24 has enjoyed a range of performance improvements, gains that have had an immediate impact on its customers. As an example, White points to migrating an enterprise client from a legacy UNIX-based Oracle environment to Cisco UCS. “They saw such huge performance increases that they actually asked us to pull a processor out, because they were afraid that users were going to get used to the faster load times,” says White. “We assured the CIO that the Cisco UCS platform would enable us to continue meeting that performance metric.”

Solution List

Data Center Solutions

- Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS)
 - Cisco UCS B-Series Blade Servers
 - Cisco UCS 5100 Series Blade Server Chassis
 - Cisco UCS 6100 Series Fabric Interconnects
- Cisco Nexus 5000 Series Switches
- Cisco Nexus 1000V Series Switches
- Cisco Catalyst 6509 Virtual Switching System (VSS)

Business Critical Applications

- Oracle Business Intelligence
- Oracle E-Business Suite
- Oracle Hyperion
- Oracle JD Edwards
- Oracle PeopleSoft
- Oracle Fusion
- SAP
- QAD
- Microsoft SharePoint, Exchange, and Dynamics

As White explains, using Cisco UCS to optimize Secure-24's virtualization efforts has been critical to these performance improvements. "We were able to increase the number of virtual machines by 30 percent per physical blade, which we were also able to translate back to lower costs for our customers," he says. "Our clients want the lowest-cost solution but need the highest availability. It sounds a little counterintuitive, but with the Cisco UCS platform, we're able to deliver that high performance but still yield cost savings."

Prior to the Cisco UCS platform, White's team had faced challenges getting the desired amount of memory into a small footprint. "With the Cisco blades, we're able to get a tremendous amount of memory within a single blade and a high amount of CPU. And we've seen a lot of benefit specifically around the UCS B-Series Servers being able to deliver a maximum of 40 cores on a single blade with up to one terabyte of RAM. It allows us to put workloads on a blade that we previously couldn't."

Other savings resulted from being able to reduce the amount of cabling by 70 percent. "The Cisco UCS platform fits into a very small footprint, which allowed us to reduce our overall rack space. The subsequent reduction in power translates directly back to cost savings for us," says White, who points out that energy is one of the major costs of delivering hosted applications.

Even more significantly, deploying Cisco UCS allowed Secure-24 to extend the life of its data centers by 35 percent. "Our data center space is a valuable commodity and a valuable part of our business delivery model," says White. "So with the space savings and power reductions, we're able to actually extend the life of our data centers. That way, instead of constantly worrying about hardware refreshes, we can focus on innovating in the data center."

Next Steps

As virtualization continues to improve and continues to mature, Secure-24 believes it will be able to run workloads in the cloud that simply weren't possible before. "Cisco UCS enables us to consider high-performance workloads that we may not have considered for virtualization in the past," says White. "This will be a big selling point for us, and we're looking forward to exploring the full range of possibilities with the Cisco UCS platform."

This customer story is based on information provided by Secure-24 and describes how that particular organization benefits from the deployment of Cisco products. Many factors may have contributed to the results and benefits described; Cisco does not guarantee comparable results elsewhere.

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