

Service Provider Delivers Secure Cloud Services for the Enterprise

Customer Case Study



Steria offers differentiated Platform as a Service while reducing customers' TCO by up to 25 percent.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Groupe Steria SCA


Industry: Information Technology

Location: Paris, France

Number of Employees: 20,000

Challenge

- Devise profitable cloud model
- Protect existing customer base
- Attract new customers

Solution

- New Platform as a Service offer based on Cisco Unified Computing System and Cisco Nexus 1000V Series Switch

Results

- Margins are higher while operating costs are lower
- Smooth and secure transition to cloud for existing customers
- Pricing and functionality of service appeal to new markets

Challenge

Already one of the largest providers of IT-enabled business services in Europe, Steria is also becoming a global player with a growing presence in India, North Africa, and South East Asia. With proven consulting skills, and expertise in IT and business process outsourcing, the company decided that the time was right to extend its offer to the cloud.

Instead of competing with consumer-oriented services in the public cloud, Steria would target its new offer exclusively at enterprise users. A platform needed to be selected that would allow Steria to maintain the high standards of service delivery, performance, and management that enterprises expect. Security was particularly critical, because the cloud economic model is based on a shared IT infrastructure, while the ability to fulfill exacting service-level agreements was another imperative.

Because the enterprise market continues to be cautious about adopting the cloud model, Steria wanted to design and position its new services in a way that would make it easier for companies to take the first step. Steria was already managing IT infrastructure for several customers, many of whom had started to transition from traditional IT models toward a virtualized environment. One objective was to give those customers a natural and easy progression from virtualization to the cloud.

"We wanted to show customers that we could accompany them all the way on their data center transformation journey towards the cloud, using innovative technology and a brand new service model," says Eric Fradet, industrialization director at Steria. "The idea was to extend our current services with an additional offer that delivers extra features and benefits, while providing continuity between the virtualized and cloud environments."

To make cloud-based services successful in commercial terms, the company needed a technology platform that could substantially reduce operating costs, while enabling Steria to quickly and easily allocate, deallocate, and reallocate IT resources between different IT services and even different customers. In addition, the company wanted to minimize its risk and start slowly, with a relatively low investment, while retaining the option to scale quickly, without hidden costs, should service take-up be higher than expected. "We were looking for a technology platform that mirrored the flexible economic basis of the on-demand cloud computing model," says Fradet.



“We are offering more services at a lower cost than before. Our margins have increased, while customers’ costs have decreased.”

Eric Fradet
Industrialization Director
Steria

Solution

The [Cisco Unified Computing System™](#) (UCS™) was the only data center architecture that fulfilled Steria’s requirements. Designed as a virtualized platform on which to deliver cloud-based services, UCS brings together several elements that usually reside on different systems: server, network, storage, and virtualization.

This unified approach enabled Steria to design the network elements of a service at the same time as the server elements, making it possible to include functions that customers particularly value, such as network security and segregation, within the offer. Not only would this give extra depth and customization to a service model that is inherently “off the shelf,” it would also give Steria an additional competitive advantage by further reducing the time that it takes to reconfigure infrastructure in response to customers’ requests.

Cisco® UCS is a “stateless” system, meaning that the hardware configuration and LAN/SAN connectivity requirements that applications depend on are separated from the physical servers themselves. On UCS, these configuration details are contained and managed in a “service profile,” which allows applications to be activated or deactivated on any physical server in the environment, or moved from one physical server to another, even if the servers are not virtualized. This facility allows Steria to provision its data center resources more quickly and to utilize them more effectively than on legacy (albeit virtualized) platforms.

“Because Cisco UCS is a shared infrastructure platform, we no longer have to manage several siloed systems for different applications or customers,” says Fradet. “This means we can spend less time on routine maintenance and focus much more on adding value to customers.”

Steria also deployed a Cisco [Nexus® 1000V Series Switch](#) to provide the security that is specifically required for virtual machines in a multitenant environment. The Nexus 1000V switch places intelligence in the network that protects virtual machines, even when they are moved to different physical servers, and helps ensure that the data center environment remains flexible without compromising security in any way.

Defining and implementing security rules is easier on UCS than other platforms because the network, server, storage, and virtualization elements are all managed from a single location. Steria also liked the fact that it would not be necessary to make potentially costly and disruptive changes to the existing storage setup, because UCS is “storage agnostic” and works with many vendors’ equipment.

An important consideration was the global reach and substantial R&D investment of Cisco, together with the company’s vision for data center evolution that is embedded in the [Cisco Unified Data Center](#) framework and architecture. As Cisco shared with Steria its roadmap and vision for unified computing and other critical components of its data center portfolio, Steria began to discuss its business strategies with Cisco, and these early interactions developed into a strong collaboration.

Infrastructure on Command was the first Platform as a Service offering to be built on UCS. It enables enterprises to purchase secure IT platforms to their specification, using a “pay as you need” pricing model. Services are automatically provisioned online and become available for customers to use within 30 minutes.

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Eric Fradet
Industrialization Director
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Results

Early take-up of the service was encouraging, and customers particularly appreciated a transition to the cloud that was smooth and free of any disruption. Since the service launch, Steria has noticed a more positive approach to the cloud among customers generally, a change in attitude that is already opening up more business opportunities.

Although cloud computing delivers benefits no matter which IT platform is being used, UCS has enhanced many of those benefits for Steria. The system’s unified architecture has provided unprecedented flexibility, for example, enabling Steria to deliver a new Platform as a Service capability to customers in just 30 minutes. Previously, it used to take one or two days to provision a new server in a managed or outsourced environment.

The speed and flexibility of UCS have not compromised other essential attributes of an enterprise cloud offer, such as high levels of performance and security. Without UCS, Steria would not have been able to offer customers such favorable service-level agreements, or provide the degree of server and network segregation required by enterprises for security purposes.

Steria has already reduced its operating costs significantly, because the UCS has cut the number of cables required by more than 60 percent and reduced energy consumption in the data center by at least 20 percent. Incremental cost reductions will follow, as more UCS systems are deployed. Time savings, due to the unified management and simplified infrastructure of UCS, have also contributed substantially to cost efficiencies.

Lower operating costs have not only enabled Steria to successfully introduce a new business model, but have also allowed the company to give customers better value. “We are offering more services at a lower cost than before,” says Fradet. “Our margins have increased, while customers’ costs have decreased.”

Steria estimates that the total cost of ownership has dropped by 20–25 percent on average, depending on the customer. One customer, for example, used to have about 200 servers in production, with average utilization rates of 20–25 percent. Using Infrastructure on Command, that customer has reduced the number of servers, raised utilization rates, and cut its total cost of ownership for one year by 28 percent. The customer also benefits from the “elasticity” of a service that can be increased or decommissioned according to business peaks and troughs.

The unified architecture in UCS has enabled Steria to make the cloud model a success, from a financial as well as a technical perspective. The system’s intrinsic flexibility will also bring longer-term benefits by giving Steria real freedom to take appropriate business decisions in the future, without having to redesign its entire infrastructure.

Next Steps

Having achieved its goal of entering the cloud market early, with a strong and differentiated offer, Steria is now focusing on creating a Software as a Service portfolio comprising some of the applications that it develops internally. The company is also planning to extend its use of UCS by purchasing a system for its UK operation and moving its development platform in France (about 400 servers) on to UCS. In addition, Steria will transfer its internal unified communications applications, including IP telephony, on to UCS, as well as the new service management platform that the company is developing for its customers.



More changes are coming, as Steria evolves to better serve the market. "As well as showing existing and new customers that we are innovative and capable within the cloud, we're now in a position to address some new industries, such as media and communications," says Fradet. "At the same time, our unified computing environment has enabled us to re-think our organizational model as we become a utility provider."

For More Information

Details of the Cisco Unified Data Center architecture and solutions are available at: <http://www.cisco.com/go/datacenter>

For more information on Cisco UCS, please visit: www.cisco.com/go/unifiedcomputing

Details of the Cisco Nexus 1000V Series Switch are available at: www.cisco.com/go/nexus1000v

Product List

Data Center

- Cisco UCS B200 M1 Blade Server, four chassis, two Fabric Interconnects, and 32 servers
- Cisco Nexus 7000 Series Switches
- Cisco Nexus 1000V Series Switches



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