OGL Computer

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ATLANTIS ENSURES THE COMPETITIVENESS OF NEW DESKTOP-AS-A-SERVICE OFFERING

Using a software-defined storage solution from Atlantis Computing, OGL Computer has succeeded in launching a new hosted virtual desktop service for small and medium-sized businesses that outperforms the competition.

A privately-owned IT services company, OGL Computer has built its success over a period of 40 years by delivering the latest and most innovative technologies to small and medium-sized businesses. It wanted to introduce a hosted desktop service for customers with 5-200 users that would deliver high performance at a competitive price. OGL already offered a range of other cloud-based IT services, including hosted email, hosted back-up and infrastructure-as-a-service, so developing a desktop-as-a-service offering was "a logical next step," says Mark Slater, a solutions architect at OGL.

34% LESS EXPENSIVE THAN A SAN
The company's research and development team started to specify and design the IT infrastructure necessary to deliver a high-performance, multi-tenant virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) solution. Initially, it planned to use a storage area network (SAN) and solid state drive (SSD) storage, but the costs were higher than expected. When OGL discovered software-defined storage solutions from Atlantis, it realised that this alternative approach to storage would enable it to achieve its business objectives for a lower total investment and consequently set more competitive subscription prices for its new service.

"We estimate that the cost of 1,500 Atlantis licences was 34% less than the cost of purchasing an SSD-based SAN for up to 1,500 desktops," Slater says. "What is more, the SAN solution would have required additional rack space and power, as well as 2-3 hours of technical support per week. So, Atlantis offered far better value for money overall, as well as impressive performance and more flexible scalability."

CHALLENGES
- Create a desktop-as-a-service offering

- Manage set-up costs to enable competitive pricing for the SME market

- Exceed customers' performance expectations

SOLUTION
Atlantis software-defined storage solution

BENEFITS
- 34% less expenditure on storage than anticipated

- 10x faster desktop performance than using similarly priced SSD based SAN

- Modular scalability

- Customer satisfaction and business growth

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10X FASTER PERFORMANCE THAN SSD

The company estimates that a physical desktop can typically deliver 70-80 IOPS (disk input/output operations per second), whereas typically a virtual desktop solution based on SSD SAN storage hardware is designed to deliver an average of 20 IOPS per desktop. "If we had opted for SSD based SAN storage to deliver our 1,500 desktops we would have been looking at a SAN capable of delivering 30,000 IOPS, which, when heavily loaded, would have led to us offering customers slower performance than they had with their existing physical desktops, and we didn't want to do that," explains Slater. "Atlantis software has enabled us to deliver 16,000 IOPS per host equating to an average of 200 IOPS per desktop, with less than one millisecond of latency, which is more than double the performance of a typical desktop PC and a ten-fold improvement in available IOPS over a similarly priced SSD based SAN solution."

According to OGL's research and development manager, Paul Colwell, this fast desktop performance gives the company a critical competitive edge. "Our use of software-defined storage from Atlantis has enabled us to far exceed not only the performance of our customers' existing desktops, but also the hosted desktop services from other vendors. The superior performance and low cost of Atlantis storage helps us to offer a competitive and attractive proposition for small and medium-sized businesses."

POSITIVE CUSTOMER FEEDBACK

OGL currently delivers its hosted VDI service (called cDesktop) for 30 customers (around 1,500 desktops), and feedback from users has been consistently positive. Most companies use the hosted desktop service to access a combination of Microsoft Office, enterprise resource planning (ERP) and accounting applications, however some businesses have more power-intensive requirements. "One or two of our new customers want to use computer-aided design packages and high-end graphics solutions," Slater says. "If we had gone with a SAN, we would have struggled to meet the performance requirements for these kinds of applications."

In the twelve months since OGL launched its new hosted VDI service, the Atlantis software has proven to be highly reliable. The company currently has 20 hosts, each serving 80 desktops. This infrastructure helps OGL to deliver a very resilient service for customers, by eliminating single points of failure. Should the company experience an unexpected hardware outage with one of its hosts, the small number of users affected can continue working by connecting to another host.

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Mark Slater,
Solutions Architect, OGL

SCALABILITY FOR BUSINESS GROWTH

OGL particularly appreciates the linear scalability of the Atlantis software. The company can gradually increase the number of desktops it can support, as needed, by simply adding new hosts and purchasing additional Atlantis licences in small increments. If, on the other hand, the company had deployed a SAN-based solution, any expansion in the service would require a large capital expenditure on storage hardware up front, which would be mostly unused until the customer base was fully grown.

"Our cDesktop hosted VDI solution has been our best-selling hosted service ever," Slater says. "We are just about to create a second VDI platform, to enable us to fulfil our order book and meet additional demand from existing and new customers. As before, Atlantis will be right at the core of our service."

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Paul Colwell,
Research and Development Manager, OGL

VIRTUALISED IT ENVIRONMENT

- VMware vSphere 5.5 hypervisor

- Citrix XenDesktop 7.6

- Citrix Provisioning Server 7.6

- HP server hardware

- Atlantis software-defined storage

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The New Order of Storage Freedom

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