Success Story

Cherokee Nation Businesses Standardize on FlexPod to Support an Agile, Shared Services Model

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Businesses

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Customer Profile

Cherokee Nation Businesses, LLC (CNB), headquartered in Catoosa, Oklahoma, manages a diverse portfolio of subsidiary companies for the Cherokee Nation, the largest Native American tribe in the United States. Although the entertainment and hospitality sectors produce the majority of its business, CNB has experienced significant growth in other industries, including technology, security and defense, construction, and healthcare.

Challenge
Supporting new directions

CNB's mission to expand and evolve Cherokee Nation companies and business lines has led to double-digit growth in just a few short years. To better and more cost-efficiently accommodate IT needs across this dynamic enterprise, CNB's IT organization is transitioning from standalone environments for each business to a centralized, shared IT services model. CNB engaged long-time partners NetApp and Presidio to support the implementation of the new strategy.

"We operate a very lean, efficient IT organization and depend on NetApp and Presidio to provide solutions that deliver a solid return on investment," explains Todd Gourd, CIO for CNB IT.

The Solution
A flexible foundation for shared services

Working with NetApp and Presidio, CNB standardized operations using the pre-validated, pretested FlexPod Datacenter platform by NetApp and Cisco, which simplifies deployment and management across the stack. FlexPod Datacenter solutions were deployed at CNB's main data center, which supports its largest entertainment and hospitality property, Hard Rock Hotel & Casino Tulsa, as well as shared services for other subsidiaries. A FlexPod and NetApp SnapMirror® software solution, located within a second CNB data center, facilitates disaster recovery (DR) for the main site and other CNB businesses, including remote casinos.

Each FlexPod features a FAS3240 storage system connected to Cisco® Unified Computing System™ (UCS®) blade servers and Cisco Nexus® Series switches over a 10GbE network using NFS, CIFS, and FC protocols.

Continuing the momentum, the IT team also rolled out FlexPod platforms with NetApp FAS2240 storage systems to support CNB's other gaming sites in Oklahoma.

"In three days we stood up FlexPod builds for five casinos," says Clay Guthery, systems engineer for CNB IT. "FlexPod gives us the reliability and scalability we need to meet stringent uptime requirements and advance our shared services strategy one site at a time."

Seamless integration with VMware

CNB has virtualized 83% of its applications across its entertainment and hospitality business, including Oracle® databases for hotel management; Microsoft® Exchange Server, SharePoint®, Server, and SQL Server®; a Micros point-of-sale system; and Kronos time-management software. The FlexPod infrastructure integrates with CNB's growing VMware® vSphere® environment and optimizes operations with NetApp Flash Cache™ and Flash Pool™ technologies.

"NetApp Flash Cache and Flash Pool significantly improve the performance of our business-critical VMware environment, without having to buy more disk to scale performance," says Guthery.

CNB's core casino management system, encompassing everything from video poker and slot machines to frequent-player reward programs, is also virtualized and prevalidated for use with VMware and NetApp. Virtualizing its casino management system on existing NetApp storage helped CNB avoid approximately $1 million in storage acquisition and deployment costs.

Easy management across local and remote sites

NetApp OnCommand® System Manager, coupled with NetApp Snapshot® and SnapRestore® technology, NetApp SnapManager® for Microsoft Exchange and SQL Server, NetApp Virtual Storage Console for VMware vSphere, and CommVault backup solutions' integration, enable CNB IT to automate and simplify management, backup, mirroring, and restoration across all its NetApp systems.

Business Benefits
Lower TCO, higher returns

Improving operational efficiencies across the enterprise generates additional financial resources that are available to help create jobs and improve citizens' access to education, healthcare, and housing programs. FlexPod technology does its part by saving the business time and money. For example, despite rapid corporate growth and double the IT workload, CNB's IT team can easily manage the environment without additional staff.

With NetApp thin provisioning, CNB also maximizes storage utilization. At current levels, CNB IT can present 350TB of NetApp storage for business use with only 87TB of actual storage at the main data center. Deduplication saves almost 200TB of capacity by eliminating duplicate data across production, backup, and DR.

Nonstop data access and five-nines uptime supported by NetApp backup and DR capabilities help protect CNB's revenue streams and reputation in the highly competitive Oklahoma gaming market.

Support for expansion

Standardized FlexPod builds and integrated NetApp, Cisco, and VMware technologies are helping CNB IT realize its vision for a shared IT services model, no matter how large and diverse the business gets. "We can replace IT silos with FlexPod infrastructure anywhere it's needed and manage everything from our desks," says Guthery. "And, we can apply expertise gained supporting our gaming business to other areas as we grow."

Rapid infrastructure deployment and support is especially important as CNB expands. CNB's technology company will soon deliver professional services and products to various departments and agencies of the U.S. government. Cherokee Nation Healthcare Services now provides teleradiology services for Evans Army Community Hospital in Fort Carson, Colorado.

"We are increasingly reliant on technology to cost-effectively run and expand our businesses," says David Haverkamp, manager of IT infrastructure for CNB. "NetApp and Presidio help us make informed decisions to responsively meet those business needs."

SOLUTION COMPONENTS

FlexPod Components
NetApp FAS3240 and FAS2240 storage systems

Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS) blade servers

Cisco Nexus Series switches

Virtualization Components
VMware vSphere

NetApp Software
OnCommand System Manager

Snapshot and SnapRestore technology

SnapManager for Microsoft Exchange and SQL Server

Virtual Storage Console for VMware vSphere

NetApp thin provisioning and deduplication

Third-Party Products
Microsoft Exchange Server 2010

Microsoft SQL Server 2000 to 2012

Microsoft SharePoint Server 2010

Oracle

IGT casino management system

Micros point-of-sale system

Kronos time-management software

CommVault backup solutions

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