

Case study

CareerBrain Co., Ltd.

CareerBrain Co., Ltd. built a virtualized infrastructure using Fujitsu hardware products and VMware vSphere virtualization technology. The new environment enables CareerBrain to introduce new web services rapidly, and better respond to business needs, as well as stay competitive in today's dynamic marketplace. The future-ready virtual infrastructure now provides CareerBrain with transformative options to move from its private cloud to vSphere-based public clouds in the future.

The customers



Industry: Online information services for the medical and healthcare industries

Headquarters: Sumitomo Hamamatsu-cho Building 7F, 1-18-16, Hamamatsu-cho, Minato-ku, Tokyo

Establishment: July 1999

Capital: 50 million Japanese yen

Company website: <http://www.cabrain.net>

Business areas:

- Provision of professional staffing & recruitment services to individuals and institutions in the healthcare industry.
- Operates CB net, a job search site, and CB news, a quality news distribution site.

Overview

CareerBrain Co., Ltd. (CareerBrain) provides professional recruiting & staffing services for medical institutions, care homes and healthcare professionals, across Japan. This leading healthcare staffing firm recently refurbished its IT infrastructure, deploying a new virtualized environment based on Fujitsu PRIMERGY x86 servers, Fujitsu ETERNUS storage systems and VMware vSphere. The strong vSphere-based virtual foundation made it possible for the company to significantly reduce time to provision necessary server resources and to quickly make new services available to customers. In addition, the increased business agility and responsiveness is helping CareerBrain run its business more effectively and efficiently than ever. It also now has a forward-looking IT roadmap that would enable a dynamic shift to compatible public clouds in the future.

Customer background

CareerBrain wished to improve its competitiveness by faster provision of new customer services, that were truly responsive to business needs.

CareerBrain Co., Ltd., a leading healthcare staffing & recruiting organization, provides professional 'best match' solutions, as well as online information services, to about 450,000 health institutions and over 4,500,000 doctors, nurses and health workers across Japan.

Specialized in the skill areas of medical, nursing and healthcare, CareerBrain is devoted to assisting individuals in changing jobs and finding the position is right for them. It is also continually reinventing its web-based medical news distribution services based on its own exclusive coverage and content. A large part of its focus, CareerBrain operates two sophisticated websites named 'CB net' and 'CB news'. CB net is a job search site with as many as 170,000 existing registered users and 50,000 successfully new registrations per year. The website offers attractive content including medical blogs, online headhunting functions, and job introduction videos that go beyond conventional templated job postings. To ensure user convenience, the CB net website is well designed with multiple sub-sites allowing visitors to search jobs by profession (i.e. doctors, nurses, or pharmacists). A mobile version of the website is also available. These differentiating factors enable this cutting-edge job search site to continue to attract countless job seekers and employers in the medical industry. The other website, CB news, is dedicated to distributing medical and health-related news with a vast variety of informative articles and stories.

The challenge

- Have new services up and running quickly.
- Reduce rack space requirements at CareerBrain's datacenter
- Establish a robust backup scheme
- Achieve system redundancy
- Reduce IT management and administration effort

The benefit

- The new virtual environment has enabled CareerBrain to slash server procurement time by up to one month, helping the company react faster to changing business needs.
- Delivery of considerable cost-reduction benefits through power and rack space savings.
- Adoption of vSphere High Availability (HA) plus a dedicated backup server has helped CareerBrain establish a secure, reliable, and fully redundant infrastructure, delivering greatly improved availability and reliability.
- The remote service capabilities made server setup and administration much easier.
- The construction of a future-ready virtual infrastructure, providing CareerBrain with an evolutionary path towards use of compatible public clouds built on the same vSphere technology.

Products and services (Hardware)

- Fujitsu PRIMERGY RX300 S6 for ESX hosts
- Fujitsu PRIMERGY RX200 S6 configured as the management server
- Fujitsu PRIMERGY RX300 S6 for backup operations
- Fujitsu ETERNUS DX60 disk storage

Without a doubt, CareerBrain, formed in 1999, is a pioneer staffing & recruiting company in the healthcare industry, but even so recent competition in this field is growing fiercely, with many companies entering the market. In response, CareerBrain saw an urgent need to strengthen its IT capabilities and gain the ability to add new and attractive customer services in a timely manner with real-time responsiveness. To make this a reality, CareerBrain knew it needed a more strategic approach to the company's IT. The company's previous policy of 'Purchasing new hardware as needed'; the existing IT systems at the company's datacenter were struggling to manage the physical server sprawl and complicated infrastructures. System availability was yet another headache for CareerBrain, as most of the existing servers, except for some critical machines, were not configured for redundancy and were not part of a high availability framework.

VMware vSphere virtualization appeared the best option to meet CareerBrain's business objectives

With full support from Fujitsu and its cutting-edge facilities at Fujitsu Trusted Cloud Square, CareerBrain tested and verified their path to targeted system deployment.

To resolve their situation, CareerBrain set out an IT turnaround strategy with five primary objectives. They were:

- (1) Enable new services to be up and running quickly;
- (2) Reduce rack space requirements at CareerBrain's datacenter;
- (3) Establish a robust backup scheme;
- (4) Achieve system redundancy; and
- (5) Reduce IT management and administration effort.

Like many other companies, CareerBrain had always found it a daunting task to address rapidly-changing IT needs with best possible ROI. Each time CareerBrain planned the launch of a new website, for example, the challenge was accurately projecting whether or not the planned new site would be profitable and how profitable it could be. Accordingly, a time-consuming 'consideration' period was usually required before giving the go ahead to proceed with additional hardware investments for the new service. In addition, there were often long lead times from order to delivery of physical servers. This made CareerBrain's decision-making process slow, and hindered the company's attempts to be more agile and responsive. CareerBrain needed a change, and it began to realize that server virtualization could be the solution. CareerBrain thought, with a virtualized environment, it would be able to deploy new workloads in a matter of minutes, without purchasing additional hardware, as long as the existing physical hosts had sufficient resources to support additional workloads. As a result, CareerBrain decided to move ahead with the adoption of virtualization with confidence.

The next step was to select the right virtualization solution. Given the fact that CareerBrain's existing major systems were all based on Linux, the company narrowed its options to two, VMware or Citrix XenServer. Following carefully examination and comparison of both virtualization solutions, CareerBrain chose to go with VMware vSphere.

Products and services (Software)

- VMware vSphere virtualization software

The primary reason for this was the end-to-end vendor support for VMware virtualization. CareerBrain liked the idea that many industry-leading vendors offered 'one-stop' service and support across hardware and vSphere software. According to CareerBrain, good usability of the VMware product was also a shining point. Following thorough evaluation, CareerBrain, based on its experience, decided vSphere's interfaces were much easier to use than XenServer, which it had actually deployed for experimental purposes previously. Another existing and important deciding factor was the great potential of vSphere. VMware vSphere as the industry-leading virtualization platform was being leveraged by public cloud offerings already available on the market. As a result, CareerBrain thought vSphere adoption this time would be an evolutionary step for the company in seamlessly moving its vSphere workloads into a compatible vSphere-based private cloud environment, if it wished in the future. All of these factors gave CareerBrain the confidence to employ vSphere-based virtualization.

Once software selection was completed, CareerBrain entered the next phase of looking for hardware platforms to host the vSphere hypervisor. Following a comprehensive vendor selection process, CareerBrain turned to Fujitsu. It was pleased by Fujitsu's efforts to provide attractive pricing that outperformed other competitive proposals. But in addition, Fujitsu's wealth of experience in VMware and strong ability to provide end-to-end support - from thorough evaluation at the pre-implementation phase through to high-quality maintenance and troubleshooting services - made it much easier for CareerBrain to reach its decision. Fujitsu worked closely with CareerBrain and came up with solutions to technical issues whenever they were encountered. As part of its cost-reduction efforts, CareerBrain wanted to adopt cost-effective iSCSI connections, but concerns remained as to the practical operation of iSCSI, as CareerBrain had never used iSCSI before. That was where Fujitsu came through. To ensure the successful transition of CareerBrain's IT, Fujitsu offered CareerBrain the use of Fujitsu's state-of-the-art Trusted Cloud Square testing facilities. Within that center, Fujitsu deployed a test bed with an identical configuration to CareerBrain's targeted production environment. This greatly helped the company conduct its proof-of-concept testing. That way, CareerBrain was able to verify the proper operation of the planned new environment. This was one example that demonstrated the real value of working with Fujitsu, and CareerBrain later said it wouldn't have completed the virtualization project without the carefully-prepared tech support from Fujitsu.

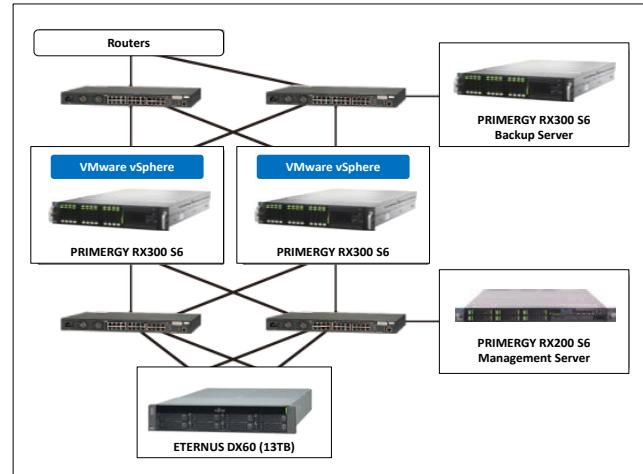
The new solution deployment at CareerBrain

VMware virtualization on Fujitsu hardware has delivered the targeted benefits, meeting CareerBrain's primary objectives of significantly reducing server procurement times, fully-redundant system architecture, as well as rack space savings.

The new vSphere-based virtual environment running on Fujitsu x86 servers was successfully constructed at the CareerBrain datacenter in

Hokkaido, Japan and went live in September 2010. The refurbished environment at the datacenter comprises two Fujitsu PRIMERGY RX300 S6 servers, configured as ESX hosts, one Fujitsu PRIMERGY RX200 S6 machine, as the management node, another PRIMERGY RX300 S6 server that handles backup operations, and a Fujitsu ETERNUS DX60 storage device, all connected via iSCSI (Figure 1). Server virtualization and consolidation have enabled CareerBrain to slash the number of physical servers from 20 to just seven. Currently, the seven physical hosts at CareerBrain support a total of 13 virtual machines running some 30 important systems, including Web servers for CareerBrain's job search sub-sites, Email server and DNS server.

Since deploying the new virtualization solution, CareerBrain has seen vast improvements in its targeted IT delivery benefits, and has built confidence in its business agility and competitiveness. The virtualized infrastructure has enabled CareerBrain to plan and execute new service launches within significantly shortened timeframes, as it now can provision necessary compute resources easily and quickly. Recently, CareerBrain launched its latest video site called "Doctors Academy". There high-profile physicians share valuable information with medical interns. This includes their expertise and experience, plus broad coverage of patient care knowledge in multiple health care settings, as well as discussions on the future of healthcare. Previously, it would have required many weeks to deploy such content-rich websites, but now, in the new vSphere environment, CareerBrain was able to add the new service in just a single day. It means the company will be able to fire up new services at least one month earlier than previously. The vSphere environment has also delivered dynamic improvements in system availability and reliability. Thanks to vSphere High Availability (HA), all applications within the virtual environment have failover protection from server failure. This, combined with the implementation of dedicated backup servers, has enabled CareerBrain to successfully take its IT system reliability to the next level. Rack space savings are also outstanding. VMware virtualization with vSphere HA capability, also means CareerBrain has a fully redundant system architecture, while the volume of physical servers has reduced, freeing up datacenter real estate for future expansion. Fewer physical servers has translated into plenty of headroom within the company's existing server racks, and greatly lowered temperatures inside the rack cabinets as a result. The new virtual infrastructure has also enabled administration savings. Previously, CareerBrain's IT staff needed to physically go to the datacenter in Hokkaido to perform onsite configuration tasks, each time new servers were implemented. Now with remote service capabilities, IT staff can control the vSphere environment from their office. This has eliminated unnecessary travelling time and expense, freeing up valuable money and IT staff time for more important tasks of growing the business.



(Figure 1) System Configuration at CareerBrain

Future scenarios

CareerBrain plans to expand its server capacity and focus on a future shift to public cloud environments, as one of its new IT strategy options.

Today, CareerBrain operates two Fujitsu PRIMERGY servers configured for hosting virtual machines, with plans to add an additional PRIMERGY server to effectively balance existing vSphere workloads across three physical hosts, providing more space to support many new services. The VMware virtualization solution running on the Fujitsu hardware platforms has provided CareerBrain with a future-ready deployment that can grow with the business. CareerBrain is greatly looking forward to continued success in operating its robust, agile and flexible virtual IT infrastructure that is helping drive its competitive advantage based on real-time responsiveness.

In collaboration with

vmware[®]

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