Simplicity, out-of-the-box

Fujitsu's Cluster-in-a-box
Interview with Daniel Pieters - Solution Manager

1 Can you describe Fujitsu's Cluster-in-a-box?

It's a simple out the box server appliance comprising of two server nodes, shared storage which is then overlaid with Microsoft Windows Server 2012 R2.

2 Why have Fujitsu developed this solution?

There's no doubt that our SME customers have a requirement for sub 30 virtual machines, allowing them to leverage the benefits of converged infrastructure - put simply, they want 'easy' access to virtualised server environments. But as a customer, if you go into the market to source this type of smaller configuration, more often you'll find converged infrastructure solutions pitched at a much larger user characteristic for example +50/+100 virtual machines. So to answer this end user and channel reseller demand, we developed a solution for the smaller business who typically have a smaller VM requirement, sub 25 VM's being typical, but moreover, an out-of-the-box solution. We engaged with Microsoft and the outcome is this fault tolerate 2 server node, shared storage solution that provides companies with a soft on-ramp to virtualised environments.

3 'One Hour to Virtualisation Ready', that's a very attention grabbing headline, can you explain the background to this?

With Fujitsu's Cluster-in-a-box we provide our own start up wizard. This wizard enables our customers to go through, what is normally quite a complicated clustering process, and instead walks them through the setup procedure stage by stage. This enables them to create a clustered fault tolerant environment and get them to a point where they can easily migrate their physical or virtual servers over to the new solution, all within a typical 30/40 minute timeframe. Importantly, the person setting up Fujitsu's Cluster-in-a-box doesn't need to have prior VMware experience or be an expert with virtualisation, they just have to have some experience with dealing with a Windows Server environment. This makes the solution far more realistic and appealing to smaller businesses and multiple branch locations, whom may have previously been put off due to complexity and a lack of in house ICT skill set.

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4   What do you like about the Cluster-in-a-box solution yourself?

For me as the solution manager in the UK, what I personally like about Fujitsu's Cluster-in-a box is its simplicity. When I talked to customers and our reseller network I heard that they were trying to achieve Window's Clustered environments themselves, but all too often this was a big drain on their time and limited employee resource. Without exception, all of these businesses struggle with time and head count resource - be it retailers, branch offices, small private enterprises or fast growing start ups.
It's completely logical to remove that burden and replace it with a solution where all the hard work has been done offsite and what turns up is a pre-validated, preconfigured, pretested, ready to go solution out-of-the-box. This means they can concentrate their time and resource in better ways.

5   How do you think the UK reseller channel will react to this solution?

As with all converged infrastructure what they provide resellers is the opportunity to talk about and position a 'customer solution' versus just a server or piece of storage kit. I like to think of it as the difference between all of the raw ingredients that go into a cake mix vs. the baked ready to eat cake. So rather than just replying to a server quote enquiry or recommending a replacement storage array they are able to discuss and propose 1 solution that addresses server, storage, networking and the operating system software that binds all those ingredients together. A much more appetising conversation and solution.

6   Describe a typical Cluster-in-a-box customer?

Broader than just small SME customers is the first thing to say. Ideal users include any customer having a requirement for sub 25 virtual machines, looking to update their servers, looking at virtualisation but not necessarily understanding how virtualisation works or having any prior experience with VMware.
We also talk about Fujitsu's Cluster-in-a-box as being great for the first time virtualiser, and with a price point to match. However, for customers who have already virtualised they may well have had challenges themselves with project overruns, budget overruns, and other unplanned extras. In this instance, the pre-validated, preconfigured, pretested, ready to go out-of-the-box characteristics of this solution will be particularly appealing.

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7 What are the top 5 customer issues that Fujitsu's Cluster in a Box addresses?

1 The IT manager who doesn't have time to research and source the separate elements they need. They need to buy something, not design and build it. The company that doesn't have the experience with IT to build and configure this solution in house.

2 The company who, when their old servers failed, would have to rebuild them and reinstall the operating system, applications and data. This could take two or three days to complete, during which time certain services would not be available to the business.

3 The company who needed something to plug in straight out-of-the box that would give them sufficient capacity for the next five to ten years. However, with no virtualisation experience they found far too many competing solutions confusing. There were multiple modules and options available but few vendors seemed keen to explain them to a layperson.

4 The IT manager who is responsible for the IT in this business across multiple locations. As the only IT person in the company they somehow have to easily manage, support and maintain (but can only ever be in 1 place at 1 time).

5 Company's who have built their IT systems bit by bit, year by year, and who now find themselves with a smorgasbord of aging kit. Built and sourced as they went along with very little midterm planning, the business is expanding and is ready to modernise and consolidate this mess, remove the associated risk and quickly implement a professional platform for future years.

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8 What are customers saying about Fujitsu's Cluster in a Box so far?

Here are some nice quotes from recent Fujitsu Cluster-in-a-Box customers;

"When our old servers failed, we would have to rebuild them and reinstall the operating system, applications and data. This could take two or three days to complete, during which time certain services would not be available to the business. If email goes down for any length of time, it feels like the end of the world."

"We wanted something we could plug in straight out-of-the box that would give us sufficient capacity for the next five to ten years. However, we had no experience with virtualisation and found the competing solutions confusing. There were multiple modules and options available but few vendors seemed keen to explain them to a layperson."

"It literally comes as one box containing two PRIMERGY blades, shared storage, network switches and two power cables. We could simply plug and play. "It took us maybe thirty minutes to get it up and running because all we needed to do was screw into the rack, plug it in and switch it on. It is a seamless transition and easy to use because it has the same look and feel as a traditional Windows server environment. From a user perspective, the only difference they notice is improved performance."

"It is a resilient, reliable and flexible platform that will support our business and growth. It will save me time and effort because fire fighting faulty servers is no longer necessary."

"I like to keep things simple and Fujitsu's Cluster-in-a-box enables me to do that. The virtual machines boot up in seconds, making it easy and fast to make changes on the fly. I've been so impressed with the elegance and effectiveness of this solution that I'll certainly bear Fujitsu in mind for future projects and further expansion."

> ▶ **For more information**

If you'd like to learn more about Fujitsu Cluster-in-a-box and discover exactly what it could help you achieve, contact:

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