

“Overall, we’re extremely satisfied with the performance, high availability, manageability and scalability of our new hyper-converged infrastructure, thanks to the FUJITSU Integrated System PRIMEFLEX for VMware vSAN.”

Karsten Ehrlich
Division Leader IT
Harro Höfliger Verpackungsmaschinen GmbH

With Fujitsu, partner EBF designed and implemented a hyper-converged infrastructure based on the FUJITSU Integrated System PRIMEFLEX for VMware vSAN.

At a glance

Country: Germany
Industry: Machinery and plant engineering
Founded: 1975
Website: www.hoeffliger.com

Challenge

Harro Höfliger put its server infrastructure and storage concept to the test. A new strategy was needed to improve performance, scalability, security of investment and high availability.

Solution

In collaboration with Fujitsu, partner EBF Systemec created a concept for migrating from a traditional infrastructure to a hyper-converged infrastructure that integrates computing, storage and network resources. With the FUJITSU Integrated System PRIMEFLEX for VMware vSAN, the transition was seamless.

Benefit

- Optimal and flexible scalability of computing, storage and network resources in one system
- Easily manageable server and storage infrastructure
- Maximized storage space thanks to deduplication and compression
- High availability, thanks to two identical data centers in the cluster with transparent failover

Customer

Harro Höfliger develops and manufactures production and packaging systems and offers comprehensive consulting services as well as other services for the entire product life cycle. The medium-sized company's customers include pharmaceutical and medical device companies as well as brand manufacturers of consumer and home-care products. Its machine portfolio covers every stage of industrialization from the lab to production. Founded in 1975, Harro Höfliger now employs about 1,300 people. Total operating performance amounted to 259 million euros in 2018, with exports accounting for 80 percent.

Products and Services

- FUJITSU Integrated System PRIMEFLEX for VMware vSAN
- 2 x server racks
- 10 x FUJITSU Server PRIMERGY RX2540 vSAN with 75 TB memory



Landmark decision regarding the server and storage infrastructure

The IT infrastructure of Harro Höfliger Verpackungsmaschinen GmbH comprised a server farm virtualized with VMware and a traditional storage environment. When the service agreement for several servers expired at the end of 2017, the company posed a fundamental question: Is the existing infrastructure still fit for future requirements and growth? What alternatives might provide improved and short-term scalability, high availability and disaster recovery as well as simpler administration? The one thing the team from Harro Höfliger knew for certain was that they wanted to continue to rely on VMware, their long-standing IT and FUJITSU SELECT partner EBF Systec and Fujitsu as hardware supplier. "Our entire server farm of around 300 virtual machines ran on VMware and Fujitsu, and we wanted to keep it that way," recalls Karsten Ehrlich, Division Leader IT at Harro Höfliger. "We've also had very good experiences with our partner EBF Systec over the past few decades. So from our perspective, there was no reason to change. On the contrary, we've benefited from the fact that EBF and Fujitsu know us so well and that we can trust these partners."

More agility, thanks to a hyper-converged IT infrastructure

Based on these framework conditions, partner EBF Systec initiated comprehensive consulting with Harro Höfliger and presented the medium-sized company with a concept for a paradigm shift: migration to a hyper-converged IT infrastructure with the FUJITSU Integrated System PRIMEFLEX for VMware vSAN. PRIMEFLEX for VMware vSAN is an integrated system developed jointly with VMware that combines computing, storage and network resources in one system and is configured and administered centrally via the VMware vCenter. The hardware basis are Fujitsu x86 Servers.

"Since Harro Höfliger often has to scale its computing or storage capacities very quickly and at short notice, a hyper-converged IT infrastructure is extremely attractive," explains Christian Bahler, Managing Director and Project Manager at EBF Systec GmbH. "Fujitsu offers a wide range of VMware-validated server configurations with preinstalled software. This makes setting up a complete VMware vSAN environment extremely quick and easy to do. In addition, the Fujitsu x86 Servers rank very high in most VMware benchmark categories."

Nevertheless, the new concept meant a new way of thinking. A proof of concept and well-grounded consulting finally convinced Karsten Ehrlich to take the step.

Concept with high availability and failover

The concept includes the establishment of two identical data centers as a cluster. These data centers are interconnected via an existing 4 x 10 Gbps fiber optic cable and ensure a transparent failover. If one machine in a data center fails, the other data center takes over without users noticing the change. In this way, Harro Höfliger guarantees the high availability of applications. Ten FUJITSU Server PRIMERGY RX2540 systems serve as the hardware basis. Some 300 applications run on the virtualized servers, including an ERP and CRM system, SharePoint, many SQL servers and other applications that Harro Höfliger has successively migrated to the new environment. The initial setup took only a few man-days, thanks to the excellent preparation.

Rolling investment planning

"We chose a rolling concept for our investment planning," says Karsten Ehrlich. "That means that we didn't immediately purchase both clusters in the final stage, but instead expanded gradually. In the future, we won't have to replace all the nodes at once but only those for which the maintenance agreement has expired. That's also attractive from a business perspective."

Two other important benefits are simple administration and transparency. "The management and administration of computing and storage are performed in the familiar vCenter. At the press of a button, the customer sees the amount of resources available or allocated," explains Christian Bahler.

Efficient memory utilization

Karsten Ehrlich is delighted with the optimal utilization of the approximately 75 TB of comprehensive storage, thanks to deduplication and compression. "We could furnish our nodes with additional RAM without a loss of performance because we utilize the storage so efficiently. We achieve two to three times the compression ratio and are currently using only about 50 TB of storage." His overall conclusion: "The project pleasantly surprised me in a number of ways, because absolutely everything went more quickly and smoothly than anticipated. Overall, we're extremely satisfied with the performance, high availability, manageability and scalability of our new infrastructure. A proof of concept for the CAD virtualization has already been successfully completed. This is then the next topic we want to tackle."

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