iSphere
Technologies

"We were literally sold out before deployment because we could finally offer SAP HANA services on demand in the most cost-effective and high-performing way."

Ludi Nel
Managing Director
iSphere Technologies

iSphere has introduced Fujitsu PRIMEFLEX® for SAP HANA® powered by FlexFrame® Orchestrator to provide a more flexible, scalable and cost-effective hosting service.

At a glance
Country: South Africa
Industry: Technology
Founded: 2012
Website: isphere.co.za

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Challenge
iSphere wanted to offer SAP HANA® as a hosted service but considered it too expensive to deploy and maintain. It needed to find a flexible, cost-effective platform that could deliver high SAP HANA performance to its local SME customer base.

Solution
Working with long-term partner Fujitsu, the company implemented FUJITSU Integrated System PRIMEFLEX® for SAP HANA powered by FUJITSU FlexFrame® Orchestrator and Intel® Xeon® processor, to enable a virtualized software and hardware environment that would reduce costs without compromising performance.

Benefit
■ Cloud-based SAP HANA hosting solution is doubling business every quarter, bringing new revenue

■ Fujitsu-based system is easily scalable to meet rising demand and new customers can be provisioned within an hour rather than weeks

■ Bringing enterprise-class applications to SMEs in Africa at an affordable cost

■ Provides a white-label offering to local SAP partners who can then expand their own business

Contact a representative at: askfujitsuza@ts.fujitsu.com

FUJITSU

Customer

iSphere Technologies, an Epi-Use Labs subsidiary, provides virtualized hosting services for the South African market, focusing on small and medium sized businesses, which might otherwise be unable to afford enterprise-class technology solutions. It employs 16 specialists and delivers SAP applications to more than 130 customers in South Africa and the wider continent.

Products and Services

- FUJITSU Integrated System PRIMEFLEX®
  for SAP HANA® powered by Intel® Xeon® processor
- FUJITSU Integrated System PRIMEFLEX®
  for SAP Landscapes powered by Intel® Xeon® processor

Challenge

Since 2012, iSphere has offered a standard hosting platform based on VMware Hypervisor running SAP R3 built on Fujitsu hardware. Following the launch of SAP HANA, the company was keen to introduce it and provide more flexibility and functionality to its customers. However, the challenge was to reduce the price to a more affordable level for its SME clients.

"We've been using Fujitsu hardware since day one and have built a solid relationship with the local team. It has always collaborated as a long-term partner rather than a simple vendor," explains Ludi Nel, Managing Director, iSphere Technologies. "So when we wanted to offer SAP HANA as a potential service, we turned to Fujitsu for advice."

iSphere found that deploying SAP HANA in a hardware-only virtualized environment would be prohibitively expensive. It needed to incorporate software virtualization in order to control costs without compromising performance.

"The initial operating platform for SAP HANA was too expensive for customers. The return on investment was low and the solution wasn't as scalable as we needed," adds Nel. "We wanted to start small and scale quickly to service the huge local SME sector, which meant finding a smarter way of hosting this new technology."

FUJITSU Integrated System PRIMEFLEX® for SAP HANA® proved to be the ideal solution and, after a rigorous proof of concept exercise, the company made it available to an eager market: "We were literally sold out before deployment because we could finally offer SAP HANA services on demand in the most cost effective and high performing way," says Nel.

Solution

Fujitsu's SAP-certified expertise enables iSphere to fully exploit the potential of the SAP HANA platform. Based on Fujitsu Integrated System PRIMEFLEX for SAP HANA, optimized for in-memory technology, vast amounts of data can be analyzed in real-time, safely and securely, in the cloud to enable smarter decisions. Applications are also accelerated, enhancing business processes and enabling iSphere's customers to become true real-time enterprises.

"We found the winning solution in PRIMEFLEX for SAP HANA, combined with Fujitsu FlexFrame Orchestrator, which sits at the heart of the new platform and enables the software virtualization we were lacking," continues Nel.

"We worked closely with the local team and the Fujitsu German lab for five months to design and configure the solution, which enabled a seamless transition from proof of concept to the full deployment in just two weeks."

FlexFrame Orchestrator is an open management platform that enables central and transparent management of SAP HANA infrastructures. It delivers extensive automation and integrated high availability, reducing workloads and boosting operational efficiency. This enables iSphere to make its SAP environment simpler, more efficient and less expensive for its customers.

"The entire solution is hosted on ten Fujitsu PRIMERGY servers, acting as application nodes with SUSE operating systems," remarks Nel. "In combination with NetApp storage cluster, VMware Hypervisor and Brocade switches, it provides an end-to-end, out-of-the-box solution."

Benefit

iSphere saw an instant uptick in the performance of SAP HANA and existing SAP applications, leading to demand for the new offering to soar. It expects to double its SAP HANA capacity in just two months following the success of the initial deployment.

"Having established the underlying architecture, adding new nodes is simple so we can meet growing demand," says Nel. "We are working with an increasing number of SAP partners who use our platform to deliver a hosted service to their own client base. They specialize in the consulting while we provide a stable and highly available back-end."

Perhaps more importantly, is the speed with which new services can be provisioned. What once might have taken a month to evolve through development to production, now takes less than an hour. That means a faster time to market for iSphere and its customers.

"We can be much more responsive by not having to nurse new projects through time-consuming quality assurance, load-testing and production because this Fujitsu solution is fully certified and SLA-guaranteed," comments Nel. "That translates into significant savings between 20 percent for hosted services and a minimum 40 percent for our on-premise offering."

Now that iSphere has a cost-effective, reliable SAP HANA platform in place, it can look forward to further growth.

"It's been a huge achievement for us and Fujitsu has played an incredibly important role in making our vision a reality," concludes Nel.