

IT MANAGEMENT TIME CUT 92 PER CENT

Italian food distributor reduces infrastructure management time to minutes per day.



IT personnel are best employed working on a company's IT strategy. But they can spend up to 70 per cent of their time on day-to-day IT management. The most pressing concern for businesses today is liberating them from these lower value tasks and giving them time to plan for the future.

SOLUTIONS

- VIRTUALIZATION
- CONSOLIDATION
- MESSAGING
- PROTECTION
- MANAGEMENT



CUSTOMER PROFILE

COMPANY: Alimenta

INDUSTRY: Wholesale food distribution

COUNTRY: Italy

FOUNDED: 2001

EMPLOYEES: More than 100

CHALLENGE

By spending so much time on management tasks, IT personnel at Alimenta in Italy had little chance to focus on strategic planning. The existing infrastructure wasn't flexible enough to scale with increasing amounts of data. Over time, the company faced a growing risk of key applications being disrupted or data being lost.

SOLUTION

Alimenta created a virtualized environment based on Dell™ PowerEdge™ server technology running VMware® virtualization software. The company also implemented a Dell | EMC storage solution to improve data protection.

BENEFITS

Get IT faster

- Dell services create new virtualization environment in a couple of days

Run IT better

- Servers reduced by 50 per cent
- IT personnel reduce day-to-day management time by 92 per cent
- Gold Enterprise Support for IT ensures environment delivers maximum uptime

Grow IT smarter

- Data storage is easily scalable
- IT personnel can add new applications to virtualized servers in minutes



Wholesale food distributor Alimenta has 110 employees working across Italy. Every day its employees need to effectively coordinate a large number of activities so that orders are completed and deliveries arrive on time. But, like all businesses in the industry, there is pressure to streamline management, reduce costs, and improve customer satisfaction.

Even a minor disruption to IT services such as email can be expensive to Alimenta. Just as for other businesses, there is no really effective alternative to sending emails when collaborating with colleagues, suppliers and customers. In addition, any loss of data, particularly relating to customers, has the potential to dramatically reduce productivity.

In recent years, Alimenta has grown consistently year on year. One outcome has been a significant rise in business data, which the infrastructure has found increasingly difficult to cope with. While personnel haven't necessarily been affected, IT workers

have found themselves spending more time managing the network day-to-day and completing basic maintenance work to avoid outages.

Alimenta then decided to redesign its infrastructure so that it was fit-for-purpose in the years ahead. It requested proposals from leading IT solution providers to update the network. "Dell delivered a really competitive proposal that consolidated our existing server estate and replaced our directly attached storage system with a storage area network," says Sasha Gulic, CIO, Alimenta.

Importantly for Gulic, Dell focused on understanding needs of the business before looking at the IT challenges. Next, Dell consultants took time to discuss their proposals in detail, which included server virtualization. Comments Gulic: "Dell consultants showed that they understood our business need and highlighted the benefits virtualization offered the company."



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Sasha Gulic, CIO, Alimenta

HOW IT WORKS

HARDWARE

- Dell™ PowerEdge™ 2900
- Dell | EMC CX3-20 storage area network (SAN)

SOFTWARE

- VMware® ESX Server
- Microsoft® Windows Server® 2003 Enterprise Edition
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2003
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2007

SERVICES

- Gold Enterprise Support
- Infrastructure consulting services
 - Storage
 - Virtualization
- Deployment
- Training

DELL SERVICES IMPLEMENT MAJOR NEW ARCHITECTURE IN TWO DAYS

Even though Alimenta had a long-term relationship with another solution provider, Gulic chose to work with Dell. Gulic explains: "There is an element of risk with every implementation of new technology. But Dell services gave us peace of mind when it came to virtualization and data storage.

"Apart from the excellent power and performance from Dell technology, the IT solution provider also offered a single point of contact for the whole implementation so we always knew who to contact if we had any questions."

The new architecture includes Dell™ PowerEdge™ 2900 servers running VMware® ESX server software and a Dell | EMC CX3-20 storage area network (SAN). Core enterprise applications running in the virtualized

infrastructure include Microsoft® Windows Server® 2003, Microsoft SQL Server 2005 and Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 for email. The company now plans to migrate to Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 in the coming months. Gulic comments: "The virtualised environment has given us the green light to migrate to the new solution. Dell solutions can reduce the cost and complexity of managing Exchange Server 2007 messaging environments."

Alimenta has since migrated to Microsoft Exchange 2007.

Once the hardware arrived on site, work took no more than a couple of days. At times, the work was difficult, not least when Dell Infrastructure Consulting Services had to move a terminal server running Citrix® and IBM Client Access software to the new infrastructure. Gulic says: "Dell consultants successfully migrated this complex machine to a virtual environment in less than two hours."

NEW STREAMLINED ENVIRONMENT REDUCES MANAGEMENT TIME BY 92 PER CENT

In the past, Gulic and his colleague in the IT department spent up to an hour each day on basic management tasks. Now, by moving to a virtualized environment, this time has been reduced to five minutes. "The new Dell environment running VMware® virtualization software has reduced management time by around 92 per cent," says Gulic. "The key advantage of this is that I can spend more time on higher value strategic projects."

He continues: "The biggest proportion of an IT budget normally goes towards infrastructure management. Today, Dell helps Alimenta run its infrastructure more effectively. We spend less time on repetitive tasks such as provisioning, configuration, monitoring and maintenance. The money saved on management can be invested in new technology to help drive growth."

VIRTUALIZATION CONSOLIDATES SERVER NUMBERS BY 50 PER CENT

Alimenta has reduced the number of physical servers by 50 per cent. "By moving to a Dell virtualized environment we reduced our number of physical servers from four to two. Even better, we are running 12 virtual servers on those two machines," comments Gulic.

He continues: "Because of virtualization, implementing new applications on our servers has gone from hours to minutes. We are saving time across all areas of IT management."

Feedback from personnel has been good, not least because connecting to their email client is much quicker in the morning. Gulic adds: "Over time, we expect some real reductions

to our physical infrastructure costs. The Dell environment is very scalable, allowing us to develop our infrastructure in a smarter way."

SECURE DATA BRINGS PEACE OF MIND

The Dell | EMC CX3-20 SAN, which can hold up to 48 terabytes of raw data, has future-proofed the company's storage. The company no longer spends time and money buying individual data storage disks. Better still, data is now easier to manage because it's held centrally and fast to access thanks to the Fibre Channel data transfer. "As a result of implementing a Dell | EMC SAN, business continuity is much improved in case of a server outage," says Gulic. Once the SAN was installed, Gulic and his colleague received full training from Dell on how to gain the most from the technology.

In addition, Alimenta has Gold Enterprise Support from Dell, which ensures 24 hour a day support from Dell's global Enterprise Expert Center. Centre staff, who are senior-level analysts, can troubleshoot both hardware and software issues. The service also includes case management which ensures issues are tracked internally until resolved. Gulic comments: "The advantage of choosing Dell is that we gained an end-to-end solution encompassing consultancy, implementation and services support."

For more information on this case study or to read additional case studies, go to www.dell.com/casestudies and www.dell.it



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