

Bank Gets Ready for Retail with Desktop Virtualization



Arab Investment Bank achieves up to 85 percent improvement in application performance, greater IT cost efficiency, and faster provision and recovery times

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Arab Investment Bank

Industry: Financial services

Location: Egypt

Number of Employees: 750

Challenge

- Support business expansion into retail banking market
- Improve employee IT support while lowering costs

Solution

- Cisco Desktop Virtualization Solutions

Results

- 85 percent improvement in application performance, along with time to provision and time to recovery cut by 80 percent and 95 percent respectively
- Savings of 70 percent on cabling, 90 percent on licensing, and 70 percent on power and hardware
- Agility to move into desired retail banking services with flexibility to meet changing customer needs

Challenge

Arab Investment Bank is an Egyptian federal joint stock company founded in 1974 and primarily involved in investment and business banking services. Headquartered in Cairo, it has 13 branches across Egypt and serves a wide range of business customers as well as offering funding programs, products, and services that comply with the Islamic sharia.

In recent years, the bank has been increasingly interested in delivering retail banking services. To make this transition, it needed to recruit and train new staff and introduce new systems, which the bank's IT infrastructure was poorly equipped to support.

In particular, its data center was unable to support features such as virtualization for the cost effective deployment of new IT resources. At the same time, an aging desktop estate was stretching IT support and incurring mounting costs. As a result, the CEO and board of directors tasked the IT department with implementing a new data center model that could help the company expand while achieving new levels of efficiency and desktop productivity.

"Our strategy was to reduce the number of employees needed for helpdesk support while providing more security on desktops and lowering power consumption, Microsoft Windows license costs, and management overheads," says Shaher Shafik, chief information officer at Arab Investment Bank.

The IT department realized the best way to do this would be to use virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) to replace existing traditional PCs equipped with Microsoft Windows XP and Windows 7, running IBM and Windows Office 2012 applications. The question was where to find the best server technology for such a VDI architecture.

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Chief Information Officer
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Solution

To help make the transition, help was sought from Systems Engineering of Egypt (SEE), a Cairo-based systems integrator and Cisco® partner. A two-day workshop run by SEE led to a proof of concept. “We carried out evaluations with other vendors, but in the trial Cisco achieved high results,” says Waleed Zakaria, information security and systems manager at Arab Investment Bank.

The bank already had ample experience of Cisco technologies including Cisco ASA next-generation firewalls, aggregation services routers, wide area application services, IP phones, and switches. Following a request for proposal, it chose the Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS®) as the foundation for its VDI deployment, with two UCS C220 M3 Rack Servers in each of its main branches.

The UCS servers come equipped with Intel® Xeon® Processor E5-2620 chip sets to meet a range of demanding performance and energy efficiency requirements for compute-intensive applications. Arab Investment Bank relies on EMC arrays for storage and uses Microsoft Hyper-V Server 2012 hypervisor for virtualization.

Arab Investment Bank initially piloted Cisco Desktop Virtualization Solutions with zero clients among users at its headquarters and a branch in the Mohandessin neighborhood of Cairo. This test allowed the bank to evaluate boot, application, and file sharing speeds as well as ease of management. Within four months, the low total cost of ownership and easy management led the bank to deploy the solution to 250 users across six branches. This usage level will grow as the bank continues to add workstations.

Employees use the virtual desktops to access standard Windows 2012 applications including Microsoft Office suite, Microsoft SQL 2010 database systems, and Microsoft Exchange Server 2010 email. “Every step of the implementation was handled excellently by SEE,” says Shafik. “By investing in Cisco, we knew we would get a high level of support from the partner, along with a single point of contact for maintenance and a single vendor for both our servers and network.”

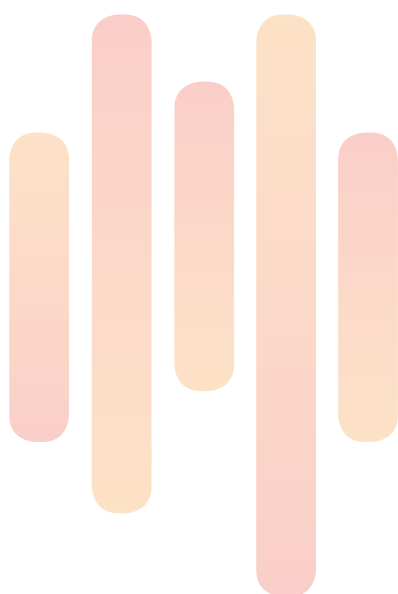
Results

The bank has been impressed with how easy it is to manage Microsoft Remote Desktop Services on the Cisco UCS platform. The integration between the two systems eliminates the need to install applications on workstations; they can be installed remotely without having to visit offices.

“The IT support team receives very few support calls, and when they do our technicians can fix the issues much faster, accessing the desktop remotely using Microsoft RDS 2012 management tools. Software updates are handled centrally and are easier to manage. Overall we have more security and a lower cost of antivirus license per virtual desktop,” says Zakaria.

Cisco Desktop Virtualization Solutions has also helped Arab Investment Bank achieve a 95 percent improvement in time-to-recovery for applications, reduce licensing costs by 90 percent, and improve application performance by 85 percent. The bank is also benefiting from around 75 percent less cabling and 70 percent less power and hardware utilization.

“Private cloud computing with zero clients has prompted a rethink in the way that we view deploying computing resources,” adds Zakaria. “We’re able to give information to our employees where they need it by using easy to manage technology. That’s something that we weren’t able to do before. Previously, we had four IT technicians each spending 1.5 hours a week repairing PCs. Now, it’s around one hour a month combined, if that. And we’ve reduced the time spent on hardware troubleshooting by 80 percent.”



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Now, the bank is able to distribute virus protection patches and software upgrades centrally, helping ensure tighter security and less risk of data leakage. Employee productivity has been increased by single sign-on integrated with Microsoft Active Directory. Moreover, Cisco Desktop Virtualization Solutions are providing Arab Investment Bank with a more agile IT infrastructure, facilitating future growth and technology migrations. “These benefits have significantly reduced total cost of infrastructure ownership for the bank,” Shafik says.

Next Steps

Thanks to the VDI deployment, Arab Investment Bank is well poised to support growth into the retail banking market, with plans to eventually replace all traditional desktops throughout the business. Although the bank does not currently use video or instant messaging, the infrastructure is now perfectly adapted to integrate these channels should the need arise. In the meantime, the bank is also improving its disaster readiness with the creation of a second data center, along with renovating its existing headquarters-based computer facility.

For More Information

To learn more about the Cisco architectures and solutions featured in this case study please go to:

www.cisco.com/go/vdi

www.cisco.com/go/ucs

Product List

Cisco Desktop Virtualization Solutions

- Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS)
 - Cisco UCS C220 M3 Rack Servers
- Intel Xeon Processor E5-2620
- Microsoft Hyper-V

Storage

- EMC storage arrays

Applications

- Microsoft Office
- Microsoft SQL 2010
- Microsoft Active Directory
- Microsoft Exchange Server 2010



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