



Virtual Machine Mobility with VMware VMotion and Cisco Data Center Interconnect Technologies



What You Will Learn

VMware has been the industry leader in virtualization technologies for the past decade and has brought to the data center several new features that enable faster and better provisioning of business-critical applications. One of the features is the VMware[®] VMotion[™] technology that allows virtual machine mobility between two VMware vSphere[™] servers instantaneously with no application downtime. The capability to migrate applications with no perceivable effect to the end user enables IT departments to develop new and improved methods for provisioning and maintaining data center infrastructure. IT departments can now perform hardware maintenance, consolidate CPU and memory resources, or migrate mission-critical applications from a data center when necessary without affecting the service-level agreements (SLAs) of the applications.

A successful application migration through VMware VMotion heavily relies on the underlying network infrastructure. Therefore it is extremely important that IP network be resilient, robust, and highly available. The IP network becomes more important when the applications have to be mobile across data centers. Cisco has been the industry leader in IP network and routing technologies and has been providing data center IP network extensions since the 1980s. Cisco[®] switching and routing technologies provide the robust and redundant network that is essential for VMware VMotion to succeed.

This document discusses the VMware VMotion feature and Cisco networking technologies essential for application mobility across data centers.

VMware and Cisco Migration Solution

The VMware and Cisco solution shown in Figure 1 enables customers to perform live application migration across data centers. The components used are a VMware vSphere 4.0 server cluster enabled with VMware VMotion in each data center, a VMware vCenter server, and a data center interconnect (DCI) WAN. The applications provisioned on the VMware vSphere server can be migrated across the data centers or a private cloud with no application downtime. The solution itself does not need any new software or hardware to perform these migrations.



Table 1. Application Mobility Using VMware vMotion Solution Options

Network and Storage Topologies	Shared Storage	Active-Passive Storage	Active-Active Storage
Extended or Stretched VLAN	Storage remains at original location	Storage is migrated before virtual machine migrates	Storage is actively available at both locations

Extended VLAN with Shared Storage

An extended VLAN and shared storage architecture extends the VLAN between the two sites, but with storage remaining at the original location. When the virtual machine migrates to the remote data center, the application will access the storage from the primary site. Storage is not provisioned for the application at the remote data center; hence, there is only one copy of the storage at any given point in time. This design can be appropriate when the distance between the data centers is not great, since I/O latency will affect application performance.

Extended VLAN with Active-Passive Storage

An extended VLAN with VMware Storage vMotion topology requires migration of storage to the remote data center prior to migration of the virtual machine itself to the remote data center. Storage is migrated to remote data center prior to the virtual machine migration using VMware Storage vMotion. VMware Storage vMotion migrates the data space associated with a virtual machine to the secondary storage location and enables a virtual machine to access this new storage after the VMware Storage vMotion migration is complete.

If storage replication were in place between the data centers, the volume(s) containing the virtual machine data could be readily available in real time at the secondary data center. The existing Active-Passive storage replication techniques require a set of explicit control operations to make the storage replica accessible to the servers in the secondary data center. Consequently, at present, this is not a supported technology to perform virtual machine vMotion.

Extended VLAN and Active-Active Storage

An extended VLAN and active-active storage solution incorporates technologies that make data actively available at both the local and remote data centers at all times. The LAN extends across the data centers, and storage is provisioned in both data centers. Data is replicated across data centers using synchronous replication technology and rendered in an active-active state by the storage manufacturer. Normally when data is replicated, the secondary storage is locked by the replication process and is available to the remote server only in a read-only state. In contrast, active-active storage allows both servers to mount the data with read and write permissions as dictated by the VMware vMotion requirements.

VMware vMotion Across Very Long Distances (Routed or Disparate IP Subnets)

Deploying VMware vMotion across data centers that are dispersed over very long distances (500 miles or more) potentially involves moving the virtual machine to an entirely new subnet, but the goal continues to be to help ensure that the IP address of the virtual machine as well as the existing client connections are not disrupted. This type of VMware vMotion migration is not possible with existing technologies. Special hardware and software features will be required to route the TCP connections



For more information about Cisco LAN extension solutions for data center interconnection, refer to <http://www.cisco.com/en/US/netsol/ns975/index.html>.

Storage Extension Technologies

The availability, scalability, security, and performance of the storage subsystem are of utmost importance to any enterprise. The task of ensuring that all these factors are addressed in a single data center is a daunting task for any storage administrator; extending them across data centers is an even greater challenge, requiring implementation of storage best practices. These factors directly affect application performance, in turn affecting the SLAs of business-critical applications. The Cisco MDS 9000 Family of SAN switches is especially suited to these SAN topologies. Table 4 summarizes the features that can be used to address the requirements for storage across data centers.

Table 4. Cisco SAN Extension Solutions

Feature	Requirements	Functions
Virtual SAN	Isolation and security	<p>The VSAN technology provides secure hardware-based network segmentation, similar to the VLAN technology that is widely deployed in LANs. Fabric services such as zoning and routing are independent per VSAN.</p> <p>In this validated solution, the nodes in each VMware ESX cluster are placed in a dedicated VSAN, to use a consolidated physical infrastructure and to be isolated with respect to security threat and fabricwide errors.</p>
	Management and access control	<p>Cisco MDS 9000 NX-OS Software management offers several levels of role-based access control (RBAC). This feature allows an administrator to be in charge of a specific VSAN without having any visibility into other VSANs.</p> <p>The administrator can map the roles defined in the VMware vCenter; for instance, an administrator may be able to access a specific VSAN and the corresponding VMware ESX cluster and nothing else.</p>
Inter-VSAN Routing (IVR)	Isolation and security	<p>In a DCI solution, each data center can implement independent VSANs, preserving the fabric services segmentation, data isolation, and administration independence. IVR allows selected devices from different VSANs, even across different data centers, to communicate without any fabric merging.</p> <p>In this validated solution IVR provides connectivity between the VMware ESX servers located in the secondary data center and the storage located in the primary data center (shared storage). IVR can also provide connectivity to execute VMware Storage VMotion across data centers and to perform primary-array-to-secondary-array storage replication.</p>
SAN	Integrated solution	The capability to plug long-wave and Coarse Wavelength



Feature	Requirements	Functions
extension with dark fiber		Division Multiplexing (CWDM) optics into the Cisco MDS 9000 Series Switches simplifies SAN extension over dark fiber. The performances are guaranteed by the extended buffer-to-buffer credits available with the Cisco MDS 9000 Series.
	Security	Cisco MDS 9000 Series Switches provide Cisco TrustSec Fibre Channel Link Encryption to secure SAN extension data across native Fibre Channel links
SAN extension with FCIP	Integrated solution	Cisco MDS 9000 Series Switches provide Gigabit Ethernet interfaces and support the FCIP protocol, to transparently extend the SAN over an IP network.
	Security	The Cisco MDS 9000 Series provides native IP Security (IPsec) encryption to secure FCIP links.
Port channeling	Availability	Cisco MDS 9000 Series PortChannels are the aggregation of multiple physical Fibre Channel or FCIP links into one logical link, to provide higher aggregated bandwidth, load balancing, and link redundancy.
I/O acceleration (IOA)	Application performances	IOA is an intelligent distributed fabric service built into Cisco MDS 9000 Series Switches. IOA accelerates I/O performance across distances. This feature helps the overall application performance remain relatively the same, even when the application server and the storage are separated by considerable distance. In this validated solution, I/O performance has been enhanced over the FCIP link.

All the features listed in Table 4 make a Cisco MDS 9000 Family SAN resilient and highly available. More information about the Cisco MDS 9000 Series Switches can be obtained from http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/hw/ps4159/ps4358/prod_white_papers_list.html.

Solution Reference Architecture and Validation

To prove the validity of the solution, VMware and Cisco configured the solution as shown in Figure 3, simulating the WAN and migrating a live application across the data centers without any downtime. The configurations of the VMware vSphere server, the LAN within the data centers, the SAN, and the WAN have been designed to enable VMware VMotion across data centers while adhering to the VMware VMotion requirements.

The solutions described here have been jointly validated in the VMware and Cisco Joint Solutions Lab. The validated topology used for the testing is shown in Figure 3.



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