Hyperconverged infrastructure enables retailer to improve critical app performance and e-commerce experience

The Orvis Company  |  Size: 1700 employees  |  Industry: Multi-channel retail  |  Location: Manchester, Vermont

**Challenges**
- Simplify the IT environment and reduce the technology footprint
- Eliminate segmentation of compute and storage for improved agility
- Increase flexibility to share resources between testing, development, production, and business recovery environments
- Create seamlessness between retail, call center, and web experiences

**Solutions**
- Cisco HyperFlex™ all-in-one hyperconverged infrastructure
  - One cluster running VSI for core applications including e-commerce, point of sale, warehouse systems, operations, and SQL Server
  - One cluster running VDI for all call center agent desktops
- Cisco Intersight™ cloud-based management platform

**Results**
- Achieved the agility to respond quickly to business decisions
- Running 66% more efficiently on the new hyperconverged infrastructure with the same amount of CPUs and memory
- Positioning IT as a true enabler of the business
- Strategizing e-commerce innovation for 2019

For more information on the Cisco HyperFlex hyperconverged infrastructure platform, visit [cisco.com/go/HyperFlex](cisco.com/go/HyperFlex)

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Challenge: Simplify IT to improve agility

Founded in 1856, The Orvis Company is the world leader in fly fishing equipment and adventurous living, with retail and data center operations in both the U.S. and UK. Since its inception, the company has always emphasized an innovator’s mindset within its culture. However, IT limitations and technical debt were making it difficult to innovate, respond, and remain agile for the business.

“We are a true omni-channel business, and our website makes up more than 50% of our revenue,” notes Jackie Ramsey, senior systems engineer. “Our goal in IT is to enable true seamlessness between retail, call center, and web while ensuring stability, security, and scalability for all three channels.”

But when a company cobbles together enough innovation, it ends up with what Tyson Martin, director and chief information security officer, calls “technical debt.”

“Our innovator’s mindset motivated our adoption of a lot of great technology solutions over the years,” says Martin. “But we ended up with this smattering of innovation, which wasn’t organized, simplified, or elegant. We wanted to simplify our environment while maintaining the ability to be dynamic and agile, and scale as required.”

How did Orvis’ technical debt present itself?

First, the company had divergent types of compute and storage, which were segmented. Those technological boundaries hindered quick, agile response to the business.

In addition, Orvis had three separate environments for testing/development, production, and business recovery. The monolithic structure and physical limitations of the infrastructure locked resources to each environment, making resource sharing virtually impossible.

“The complexity and lack of agility tied the hands of our business behind its back and essentially tripled the work of our technologists. Simplifying our environment and reducing the footprint are vital to making sure that IT can truly enable innovation,” says Martin.

“By adopting Cisco HyperFlex technology, we can more readily say yes to the business and deliver on that yes effectively. We can also confidently embrace our innovator’s mindset and pursue projects that will enable us to better serve our customers and the business.”

Tyson Martin
Director and CISO
Hyperconvergence to simplify, deliver seamlessness

In the effort to simplify IT, Martin knew he wanted a solution that was fast, reliable, and rugged. After exploring several different options, he and Ramsey opted for Cisco HyperFlex.

“We were already heavily invested with Cisco routers, switches, wireless, phones, security appliances, and communication platform,” says Ramsey. “The Cisco team was able to review what we had, certify it, and guarantee that our current technology could run on Cisco HyperFlex without issues.”

Martin and Ramsey had three core priorities for the new technology. First, they wanted interconnectivity between the Cisco HyperFlex nodes and the back plane of the network, so all components worked together seamlessly. Second, fast connectivity speed was key. Third, they wanted a completely integrated solution, where hardware, software, and network components all came from one vendor.

“We wanted to eliminate any points of complexity, so having one trusted vendor seemed logical and effective to us. Relying on Cisco to deliver every aspect of our hyperconverged solution would be truly simple and integrated,” says Martin.

Orvis has two environments running in its HyperFlex: VSI with core applications including e-commerce, point of sale, warehouse systems, operations, and its critical SQL database; and VDI holding all call center agent desktops. Martin and Ramsey are also taking advantage of the centralized management in Cisco HyperFlex, leveraging the Cisco Intersight cloud-based management platform to see all three data centers in one view.
Efficiency now, innovation on the horizon

With Cisco HyperFlex in place, the Orvis IT team has been able to respond effectively to business demands—even with little notice or preparation.

In Orvis’ busiest period during this past holiday season, the business decided to engage a third-party call center to scale capabilities. With the VDI environment running in Cisco HyperFlex, the Orvis IT team was able to accommodate 100% more seats by simply connecting and dropping the third-party call center into the VDI environment. Just like that, the machines were available and working.

“That experience with the third-party call center alone highlights how Cisco HyperFlex is enabling us to deliver seamlessly to the business,” says Martin. “We were able to mobilize quickly and realize tangible value within our first year of using the technology.”

Ramsey notes that initial benefits lean toward efficiency rather than innovation. By simply changing Orvis’ underlying hardware to Cisco HyperFlex, without altering the amount of CPUs or memory, he has seen a 66% improvement in efficiency.

But innovation is definitely on the horizon. And Martin and Ramsey are very excited about what Cisco HyperFlex can enable.

“We are planning a brand new e-commerce experience for 2019,” notes Ramsey. “We plan to tailor responsive experiences based on device and geography. We’ll have a completely new technology stack behind the scenes and will build on Cisco HyperFlex.”

Martin is also optimistic about IT being able to deliver on its calling as a true enabler of the business. He emphasizes how important it is to be able to do business in an organized, tidy, and orderly manner. Cisco HyperFlex provides that simplicity and elegance. He can feel like his team members are experts in it and are not spread too thin. And scalability and growth are easier and more efficient.

“Young and lean, but with Cisco HyperFlex, we’re feeling more powerful than ever,” says Martin. “By adopting Cisco HyperFlex technology as our infrastructure backbone, we can more readily say yes to the business and deliver on that yes effectively. We can also confidently embrace our innovator’s mindset and pursue projects that will enable us to better serve our customers and the business,” says Martin.

With Cisco HyperFlex, Orvis’s IT group is not only ready for innovation from the rest of the business, but they are equipped and excited to lead that innovation.

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Jackie Ramsey
Senior Systems Engineer

Products
- Cisco HyperFlex
- Cisco Intersight