



Nonprofit ramps up to deliver millions more pounds of food with Cisco HyperFlex System and Cisco UCS

City Harvest:

Size: 160 employees, 15,000 volunteers

Industry: Nonprofit

Location: New York City

Solutions

- Cisco HyperFlex hyperconverged infrastructure hosts virtual desktops for employees and volunteers
- Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS) runs business applications

For More Information

For more information about the Cisco HyperFlex platform, visit <http://www.cisco.com/go/hyperflex>

Forty percent of food produced in the United States goes to waste. City Harvest is a nonprofit that pioneered food rescue in 1982. The organization collects surplus food from grocers, farms, restaurants, and manufacturers and then distributes it to food pantries and soup kitchens throughout New York City. In 2016, City Harvest collected and distributed 55 million pounds of excess food and distributed it free of charge to 500 community food programs. More than 15,000 volunteers assist the hunger-relief efforts every year.

Challenge: preparing for 30 percent growth

"IT plays an important role in food rescue," says James Safonov, head of IT and information security for City Harvest. Think about the intricate planning required to schedule 22 trucks averaging 360 food pickups and deliveries a day. The IT team developed smart algorithms that update truck routes and delivery instructions in real time based on storage space, the community food programs' preferred delivery days and types of food, and the food items City Harvest has available.

To keep the focus on alleviating hunger, the IT team works to keep infrastructure simple. Previously, employees worked

on physical desktop computers and their applications ran on traditional servers. But this traditional arrangement was not ideal for a growing organization. For example, regularly replacing desktop computers taxed the budget. Employees who visited food donors and distribution centers needed VPN software to retrieve files and data. At times, volunteers who wanted to check email or do web research had to wait for a designated volunteer computer.

"Secure desktops and applications are critical as we expand anti-hunger programs," says Safonov. "Rather than spend money to refresh our desktop computers, we decided to build a virtual desktop infrastructure." An attempt to host virtual desktops on existing servers didn't work well. Performance slowed when the eleventh virtual desktop started up.

Solution: host virtual desktops on Cisco HyperFlex system

After researching several converged and hyperconverged infrastructure solutions, City Harvest selected Cisco HyperFlex™ System. "Cisco® HyperFlex is the perfect fit for virtual desktops because it's so flexible," Safonov says. "We were able to connect our existing storage arrays and add a graphics card to support Adobe

With Cisco HyperFlex, City Harvest:



Rapidly scales as operations grow



Simplifies desktop and infrastructure management and support



Saves 75 percent on endpoints

applications. We can add new nodes for more users and attach Cisco UCS® blades for more processing power.” Support is simple: one call to Cisco resolves any issue, whether it involves servers, networking, or storage.

“Other hyperconverged platforms were too expensive and didn’t work with our existing infrastructure,” says Safonov. “We would have had to rip out our core switches and learn a new networking operating system. Cisco HyperFlex extended the life of our existing storage and gives us room to grow.”

Employees can work from anywhere
Cisco HyperFlex and the Cisco Nexus® switches were up and running in just one day. The IT team built hundreds of virtual desktops in minutes. Employees and volunteers can now log in to their personal virtual desktop from anywhere, on thin clients or personal mobile devices.

Desktop and infrastructure costs dropped
The new thin clients cost 75 percent less than new desktop computers, freeing up budget for strategic IT projects. What’s more, City Harvest no longer needs to keep spare computers in inventory. “If a virtual desktop develops problems, we can build a new one in less than a minute,” Safonov says. Employees get right back to work.

Infrastructure costs also shrank. Moving 100 virtual machines from traditional servers to a Cisco UCS® server eliminated an entire rack. Good thing, because the small Manhattan data room had been heating up. “By eliminating a rack, Cisco HyperFlex saved us from spending more than \$100,000 to purchase, install, and get permits for a new cooling system,” says Safonov.

Infrastructure grows in step with the business

Food insecurity—the lack of access to adequate, nutritious food—persists at high levels across New York City. City Harvest is working hard to expand its food rescue and delivery options each year. “Cisco HyperFlex can scale as City Harvest grows to feed more people,” Safonov says. “More employees? We’ll connect another HyperFlex node. Heavier application demands? We’ll slide in another compute-only server.”

Safonov concludes, “Cisco HyperFlex and Cisco UCS make our truck routes more efficient. They securely run our desktops and our applications. Efficient infrastructure is helping us ramp up to rescue millions more pounds of food each year than we do today.”

“Cisco HyperFlex makes it easy to scale as we grow to feed more people. More employees? We’ll connect another HyperFlex node. More applications? We’ll slide in another compute-only server.”

James Safonov
Head of Information Technology
and Information Security
City Harvest

Products and Services

Unified Computing

- Cisco HyperFlex HX240c M4 Node with Cisco UCS B200 M4 Blade Server Compute-Only Nodes
- Cisco UCS Manager

Virtualization

- VMware Horizon 7

Security

- Cisco ASA 5500 with FirePOWER™ Services

- OpenDNS

- Cisco Identity Services Engine (ISE)

Wireless

- Cisco Meraki Wireless Solution

Collaboration

- Cisco Unified Communications Manager

- Cisco WebEx®



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