

Consulting Firm Uses Cloud to Tap New Markets



Amaris services provide Austrian small businesses with greater access to IT infrastructure, platforms, and applications

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: Amaris

Industry: IT services

Location: Austria

Number of Employees: 900

Challenge

- Reach new customers
- Expand products and services portfolio
- Reduce cost and time-to-market

Solution

- Cisco CloudVerse Unified Data Center Architecture

Results

- Austrian market leadership in delivery of cloud services to SMBs
- Eightfold improvement in server deployment time
- Reduced time and cost for server maintenance

Challenge

Founded in 2007, Amaris is a global IT consulting firm with headquarters in Geneva, Switzerland, and more than 40 offices worldwide. In 2012, the company made its first strategic acquisition when it purchased Thales Information Systems Austria. The acquisition added a new dimension to Amaris, which had formerly focused on consultancy engagements, by providing access to expertise and assets in IT infrastructure and managed services, and in particular the deployment of virtual data centers.

The merger helped to fast-track the provider's intention to offer cloud-based services to Austrian small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs). Arthur de Pauw, technical director at Amaris, says: "Austria is an SMB country. In the current climate, many do not have the capital reserves to invest in new technology every three or four years. Instead, their hardware refreshes are stretching to between seven and ten years. But they still have the same technology requirements that larger companies do, for example, high availability, speed, and round-the-clock service provision."

Amaris was aware that Austrian SMBs could benefit greatly from software as a service (SaaS), platform as a service (PaaS), and infrastructure as a service (IaaS) delivered on a per-user basis from the cloud. The issue was how to take such offerings to market in the most cost-effective and flexible way.

Solution

In 2009, Amaris became the first company in Austria to purchase Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS®) servers. Since then, the focus has been on developing Cloudwise, its unique cloud offering. To achieve this goal, Amaris has migrated applications and services to an end-to-end Cisco® CloudVerse data center architecture. This cloud delivery platform now consists of sixty-four UCS B230 and B200 and blade servers, powered by Intel Xeon processors. Cisco Nexus® 7000 Series and 5000 Series Switches form the data center connectivity platform, while VMware vSphere virtualization software and EMC VNX storage systems complete the package.

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Technical Director
Amaris

Amaris offers three varieties of IaaS. The most basic, which can be used for applications such as software testing and development, allows the customer to rent a single blade equipped with VMware software. The most popular model is a dedicated IaaS solution, where Amaris creates an entire virtual data center environment with multiple feeds and customized parameters to meet the unique requirements of each customer. The third option is a pay-as-you-go IaaS model, which customers can use as and when they need spare capacity, for example to deal with peaks in demand or disaster recovery situations.

With SaaS, the ability to define the characteristics of each UCS server using service profiles allows Amaris to offer a wide range of pre-packaged server and application bundles. These include web-based customer relationship management (CRM) application suites offered for a fixed fee per user per month, end-user backup services, or collaboration tool kits including customized mailbox sizes. A cloud-based HR software offer is in development. Amaris is also able to deliver service profiles aimed at specific industry sectors such as education, healthcare, or defense.

To grow with the Amaris business, the Cisco infrastructure is supported by a Cisco SMARTnet® technical services contract, and Amaris is using EasyLease financing from Cisco Capital® to help optimize its balance sheet by closely matching investment to the anticipated arrival of new revenue streams.

Results

By leveraging Cisco CloudVerse technologies, Amaris is helping customers, particularly SMB IT specialists, free themselves of basic administration tasks and provide higher-value services to their businesses. “SMBs need to concentrate on what they are good at, which is not necessarily managing infrastructure and IT services,” says de Pauw. “It’s about putting cloud services in the hands of customers so they can develop innovative ways of working. Thanks to Cisco CloudVerse and Unified Data Center architecture, we can provide all the IT they need, fully managed, for a simple monthly fee.”

IaaS solutions from Amaris are also helping SMBs save money. Charitable organizations, for example, can use infrastructure on a pay-as-you-go basis to deal with campaign peaks, thereby growing charitable revenues by not having to pay for the same level of IT services all year round. Similarly, schools and colleges can reduce the amount that they pay for infrastructure during holidays.

This flexibility has allowed Amaris to make significant inroads into the SMB market, a sector the company had not previously been able to tap into in a major way. Along the way, it is also attracting larger customers. One of its partners, which traditionally helps with SAP software implementations, has been so impressed with the performance of SAP on Cisco UCS that it is now migrating all its systems to the Amaris cloud. Amaris is also looking to deploy a cloud-based mobile and managed print offering in conjunction with Xerox.

Other exciting Amaris innovations include an enterprise storage system similar to the popular web-based application, Dropbox. And it has been able to do this with unparalleled speed, efficiency, and flexibility. “With our previous platforms, it would have taken two hours to install and configure each server,” says de Pauw. “Now we can install an entire chassis and get eight blade servers up and running in the same time.”



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Administration is simplified: engineers can carry out patches and upgrades either on the spot or remotely. As well as saving time and money for overtime payments, this newfound operational agility has improved employee satisfaction, because the Amaris IT technicians no longer have to work night shifts.

“Overall, with increased business volumes, our data center power consumption has risen slightly,” says de Pauw. “However, we now have 10 times the computing power we used to, so in real terms per-server power consumption has reduced considerably.” Combining the computing power with the Cisco UCS service profiles, Amaris can make better use of memory and CPU in each server cluster, leading to improved CPU utilization for each set of applications and successfully providing an efficient set of services to its customers.

For More Information

For more on Cisco CloudVerse and Cisco Data Center solutions please go to:

www.cisco.com/go/cloudverse

Product List

Data Center Solutions

- Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS)
 - Cisco UCS B200 Blade Servers
 - Cisco UCS B230 Blade Servers

Routing and Switching

- Cisco Nexus 7000 Series Switches
- Cisco Nexus 5000 Series Switches

Applications

- VMware vSphere virtualization software
- SAP ERP
- CRM systems
- HR systems

Storage

- EMC VNX storage systems

Services

- Cisco SMARTnet



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