



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

to the virtual machine in its new location without terminating the sessions. This approach will require the redesign of the IP network between the data centers involving the Internet. Technologies are being developed by Cisco, VMware, and standards organizations to address this network scenario in the future.

VMware and Cisco Solution

The VMware and Cisco solution, jointly engineered by the two companies, addresses two of the available topologies: extended VLAN with shared storage and extended VLAN with active-passive storage. The two components of this solution are LAN extension technologies and SAN extension or storage availability technologies.

LAN Extension Technologies

To make the same LAN to be available across the data center, Cisco has solutions to suit the type of DCI available in your network. Any solution that extends the Layer 2 subnet across data centers needs to meet the following requirements:

- **High availability:** The solution must help ensure that no link or device failure will cause the Layer 2 extension to be disconnected and thus affect the ability to perform VMware vMotion migration across the data center.
- **Load balancing:** The solution should fully utilize cross-sectional bandwidth between the data centers; DCI connections are usually more expensive than the LAN, making effective use of the available connection critical.
- **Spanning Tree Protocol isolation and loop and broadcast storm prevention:** The solution must fully contain and isolate Spanning Tree Protocol within each data center with Bridge Protocol data units (BPDUs) filtered at the boundary of each edge switch facing the core. Network loop and broadcast storm avoidance features need to be available to prevent disruption of applications.
- **Scalability:** The solution must be able to handle multiple VMware vMotion migrations concurrently. To meet this requirement, the network must be able to scale. The available bandwidth, the number of VLANs, and the number of data centers connected through the solution should all be capable of expansion as needed.

Additional services may be required in many cases:

- **Encryption:** IP Security (IPsec) or Layer 2 link encryption (IEEE 802.1AE) may be needed to help ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the data traversing between the data centers. This requirement is particularly important if the interconnection crosses a public network. Encryption may also be a requirement for regulatory compliance.
- **Hierarchical quality of service (HQoS):** HQoS may be required to help ensure quality of service (QoS) for VMware vMotion, particularly on WAN links acquired through a service provider. HQoS is important on interconnecting devices when an enterprise subscribes to a substrate service provider service.



Table 2 lists the LAN extension options for each type of DCI.

Table 2. Cisco LAN Extension Solutions and Platforms for Various Transport Options

Type of Interconnect (Transport Option)	Cisco LAN Extension Solutions	Cisco Platform
Dark Fiber or Dense Wave-Division Multiplexing (DWDM)	Virtual switching system (VSS)	Cisco Catalyst® 6500 Series Switches
	Virtual PortChannel (vPC)	Cisco Nexus™ 7000 Series Switches
	Crossponder	Cisco ONS 15454 crossponder
Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS)	Ethernet over MPLS (two data centers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series Shared Port Adapter (SPA) Interface Processor 400 (SIP-400) and SIP-600 • Cisco ASR 1000 Series Aggregation Services Routers
	Virtual Private LAN Service (VPLS) (multiple data centers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series SIP-400 and SIP-600
IP	Ethernet over MPLS (EoMPLS) over Generic Routing Encapsulation (GRE) (2 data centers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series SIP-400 • Cisco ASR 1000 Series
	VPLS over GRE (multiple data centers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series SIP-400

Additional services such as encryption and HQoS can be implemented on the Cisco hardware listed in Table 3.

Table 3. Cisco Solutions and Platforms for Additional Services for LAN Extension Schedules

Service	Solution	Platform
Encryption	IEEE 802.1AE	Cisco Nexus 7000 Series
	IPsec	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series SPA Services Card 600 (SSC-600) and VPN Services Port Adapter (VSPA) • Cisco ASR 1000 Series
Multilevel QoS	HQoS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series SIP-400 and SIP-600 • Cisco ASR 1000 Series



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.

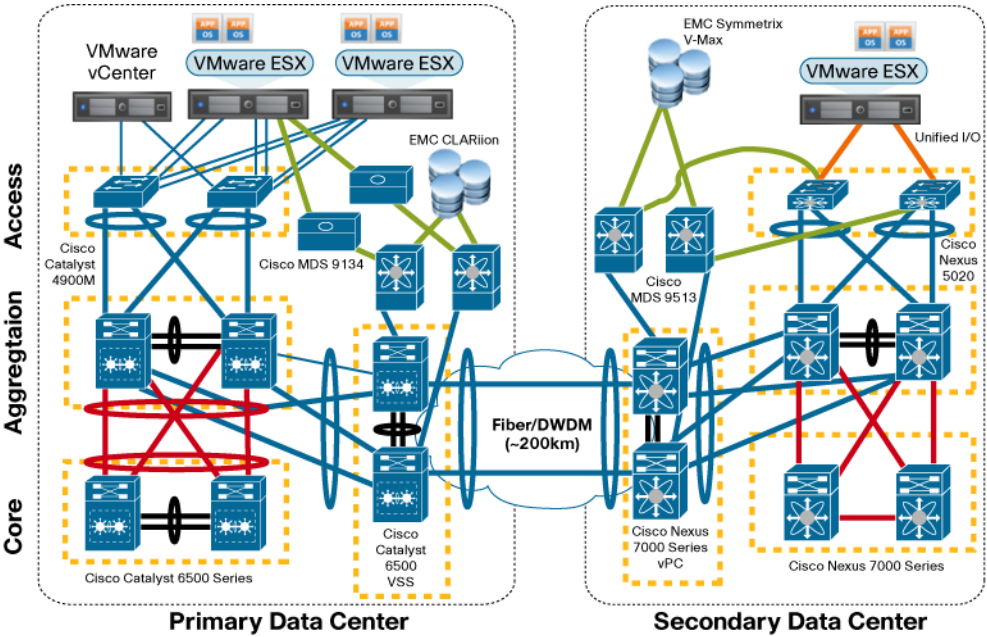
All the features listed in Table 4 make a Cisco MDS 9000 Family SAN resilient and highly available. More information about the Cisco MDS 9000 Series Switches can be obtained from http://www.cisco.com/en/US/products/hw/ps4159/ps4358/prod_white_papers_list.html.

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.

Figure 3. Jointly Validated Architecture



The network topology used in the joint solution test simulates two data centers extended over different types of DCIs. Data center 1 is a Cisco best-practices three-tier architecture with Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series Switches forming the core and aggregation layers and a pair of Cisco Catalyst 4900M Switches forming the access layer. VSS technology is used to provide the extended (or stretched) VLAN. Data center 2 is also designed using the Cisco three-tier architecture, but with the Cisco Nexus 7000 Series Switches and the Nexus 5000 Series Switches. The functional architecture at both data centers is similar, with VSS and vPCs used to provide the extended VLAN.

The storage for the solution is provisioned using either of two methods depending on the test being performed:

- Shared storage:** Storage is located in data center 1, and the SAN is extended to data center 2 using FCIP SAN extension. FCIP IOA is enabled to help ensure that the application performance does not suffer when the application is accessing its storage across the DCI switches.
- Active-passive storage using VMware Storage vMotion:** Storage is provisioned at both locations. The storage capacity is provisioned identically at both data centers, and the storage is presented to the VMware ESX servers as unique data stores. VMware Storage vMotion migration is performed from one data store to the other; later, the VMware vMotion virtual machine migration is performed. The storage must be available at all times to both the source and destination VMware vSphere servers for VMware vMotion migration to be successful. The SAN extension method used is again FCIP with IOA enabled.



- Run the DVD client and wait for 30 minutes for the client to attain a steady state; note the OPM on that VMware ESX server.
- Migrate the system to the corresponding target.
- Wait for 30 minutes for the client to attain steady state; note the OPM for that VMware ESX server.
- Perform 18 more migrations with a 10-minute wait between each migration.
- Collect test statistics to evaluate the total elapsed time.

Data Center Evacuation Test

1. Start the LoadGen and DVD Store clients on the respective client virtual machines.
2. Start the migration of the application servers in a sequential manner.
3. Collect test statistics to evaluate the total time required to migrate the data center.
4. Migrate the application servers simultaneously.
5. Collect statistics to evaluate the total elapsed time.

Test Results

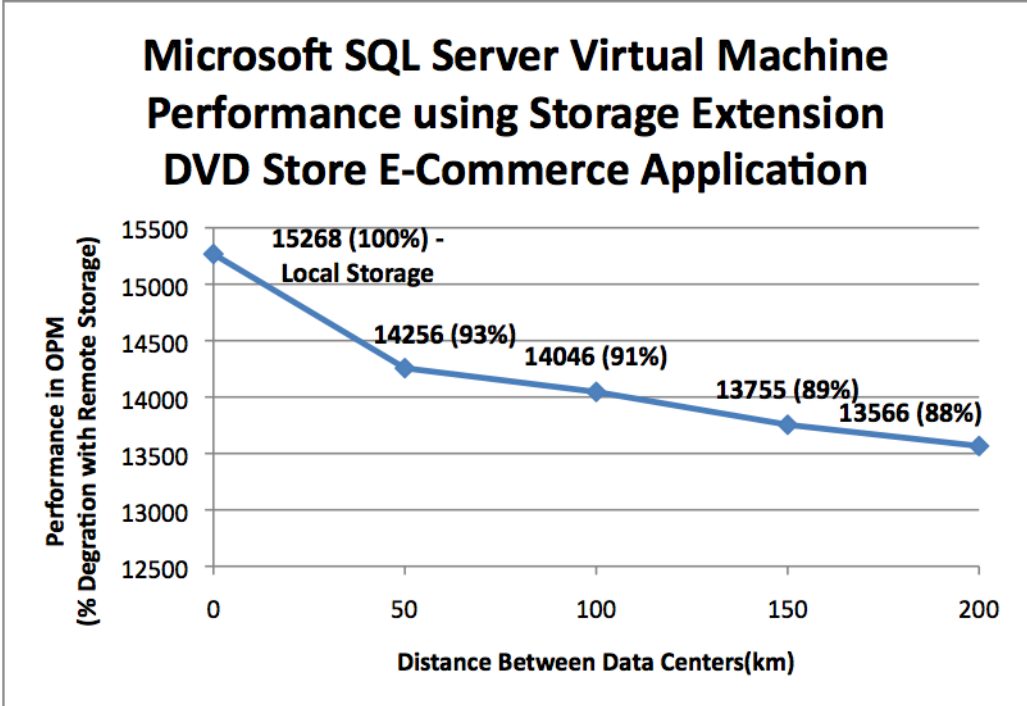
The goal of the joint testing is to measure the duration of the overall VMware VMotion migration process during VMware VMotion migration. The tests measure the time taken for the overall VMware VMotion migration to be complete, beginning from the initiation of the VMware VMotion process. The overall migration time is an important measure, and it becomes critical when multiple VMware VMotion migrations are being performed. The amount of time for the overall migration depends on the duration of each VMware VMotion migration. The duration of a VMware VMotion migration largely depends on the distance between the source and destination VMware ESX servers and the amount of bandwidth available between the data centers.

The application used to validate the solution is an e-commerce suite hosted on a Microsoft SQL Server 2005. DVD Store Version 2 (DS2) is a complete online e-commerce test application with a back-end database component, a web application layer, and driver programs. The virtual machine hosting the back-end Microsoft SQL Server database is migrated across the data centers, and the performance of the application in OPMs is captured.

Figure 4 shows the VMware VMotion migration times as a virtual machine is migrated from one VMware ESX server to another, with the servers separated by different distances. The elapsed time increases with distance, but it is directly related to the network latency and the amount of network bandwidth available for VMware VMotion as the distance increases. In the test scenario, the application client maintained all the sessions, and a momentary drop in performance was observed before the performance returned to steady-state values.



Figure 5. Microsoft SQL Server DVD Store Performance



In addition to migrating one mission-critical application across the distance of 200 km, the joint testing migrated more applications in the data center to validate evacuation of the data center for disaster avoidance (Figure 6). The joint testing included a Microsoft Exchange Server 2007 with 1000 Microsoft Outlook 2007 LoadGen users. The application performance monitored by LoadGen is shown in Figure 7. The Microsoft Exchange Server is a four-vCPU virtual machine with 8 GB of memory; resource utilization was 80 to 90 percent for the CPU, with approximately 20 Mbps of data being read and written to the disks. Simultaneously, the Microsoft SQL Server running the DVD Store database was also migrated. The OPM values for the DVD Store application are shown in Figure 5. Figure 6 shows the migration times when the two applications are migrated simultaneously. The results clearly show that the elapsed time for the Microsoft SQL Server increases by a small amount, which is acceptable since the VMware VMotion network is now being shared with an extremely busy Microsoft Exchange Server workload. In spite of this increase, there was no perceivable effect on the clients performing the benchmark.



Figure 6. Migration Times with Multiple-Application VMware VMotion Migration

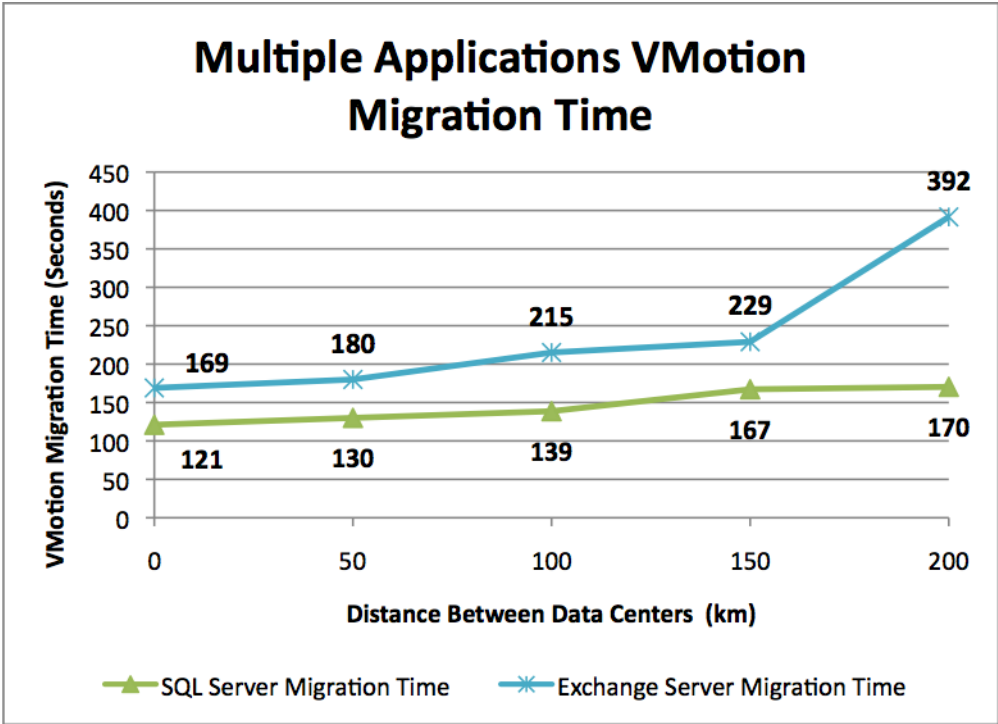


Figure 7. LoadGen Results Summary

- Welcome
- Start a new test
- View a test report

See also

- Exchange Load Generator Help
- About Exchange Load Generator

View Load Generator Report

Total number of distribution lists: 0
Total number of dynamic distribution lists: 0
Total number of contacts: 1000
Total number of external recipients: 0

Simulation Statistics

Simulation started: 8/13/2009 4:10:18 PM
Scheduled run length: Forever
Actual run length: 00D:00H:58M:46S
Stress mode: True
Remote: False

Load Generator Status

* Note that if the load generator client only runs user groups with scripted modules, its task counters are expected to be zero.

Type	Name	Task Exceptions	Task Queue Length	Task Skipped	Tasks Completed	Task Dispatched
Master	LOADSIM	8	0	1412	222723	224135

UserGroups

Loading...

Name	Succeeded	Client Type	Action Profile	User Count	Tasks per User Day	TasksCompleted
UserGroup0	Succeeded	Outlook 2007 Online	Heavy	1000	132	222723

Generated by Microsoft.Exchange.Swordfish [08.02.0045.000]



Recommended Operational Procedure

The recommended procedure for implementing the joint VMware and Cisco solution is to have the VMware vSphere high-availability clusters independent of each other in the two data centers. VMware VMotion migration across data centers should be a manually instantiated task to keep VMware Dynamic Resource Scheduling (DRS) from automatically moving virtual machines across data centers.

Conclusion

VMware VMotion enables data centers to transparently implement virtual machine mobility using the Cisco LAN and storage extension solutions. The VMware vSphere Virtual Data Center Operating System (vDCOS) with the suite of features bundled with vSphere allows customers to transparently migrate or evacuate data center applications with no downtime from a user perspective. This technological capability gives IT departments tools to redefine the business continuance and disaster recovery plans of the enterprise. The need for a more complex and expensive solution to meet the recovery-point objective (RPO) of the business continuance plan can be reduced with the use of VMware VMotion. The optimal architecture of the underlying transport infrastructure—the IP network and SAN—enhances the solution to bring the RPO to near zero, and also reduces the recovery time objective (RTO) to a very small number. The joint Cisco and VMware solution gives IT departments a very powerful tool for better provisioning, utilizing, and maintaining a virtualized data center with resources spread across multiple physical locations.

For More Information

- VMware VMotion: <http://www.vmware.com/products/vi/vc/vmotion.html>
- Data Center Interconnect (DCI): Layer 2 Extension Between Remote Data Centers: http://www.cisco.com/en/US/prod/collateral/switches/ps5718/ps708/white_paper_c11_493718.html
- Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series Switches: <http://www.cisco.com/go/6500>
- Cisco Nexus 7000 Series Switches: <http://www.cisco.com/go/nexus7000>
- Cisco MDS 9000 Family: <http://www.cisco.com/go/mds>



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