Advertising Agency Launches Platform for Global Growth

Customer Case Study

FlexPod transforms data center efficiency and scalability for BBDO Germany

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Customer Name: BBDO Services GmbH

Industry: Advertising

Location: Germany

Number of Employees: 4200

Challenge

- Reduce IT department workload through infrastructure standardization
- Help enable follow-the-sun working within parent company
- Improve data-handling speed and capacity

Solution

- FlexPod architecture based on Cisco Unified Computing System with Intel® Xeon® processor 5600 series and NetApp FAS 3270 storage system

Results

- Simplified management and provisioning
- Ability to handle annual 15 percent data growth without increasing headcount
- Standardized architecture to improve global collaboration

Challenge

The world of advertising is changing. Compared to the poster and press admen of yesteryear, today's creative directors and executives are immersed in high technology working day-in, day-out, using digital media to create entire online worlds for their clients. At BBDO Germany, a group of eight advertising agencies within the global Omnicom Group, this shift had created infrastructure demands traditionally met with massive injections of server and storage capacity.

Dusseldorf-based BBDO Services, the internal service provider charged with delivering IT infrastructure across the eight businesses, had relied on a mixed technology data center. That heterogeneous setup, with large NetApp storage arrays, multiple physical server suppliers, and Citrix and VMware virtualization software, was beginning to pose challenges.

Specifically, using servers from different suppliers was inefficient. It made data center administration arduous and time consuming for BBDO Services technicians, who each tended to specialize in a particular vendor technology. All lines of business would benefit from a single, standard platform, making it easier to introduce global processes and offering a solid foundation for growth.

"The idea was to get one solution that would benefit all by lowering costs and increasing the amount of work we could do with the same amount of people," says Martin Bandze, IT director at BBDO Services. "Moreover, the CTO of BBDO Worldwide wanted a follow-the-sun workflow solution with data centers across the globe all using the same systems and key performance indicators." A final requirement was the capability of offering an unsecured network area, or demilitarized zone (DMZ), for safely managing client applications.

Solution

BBDO had already gained some exposure to Cisco® technologies through two earlier projects. First, Cisco had provided a Wi-Fi network to support the deployment of 750 mobile devices across the business. Next, BBDO had used Cisco Adaptive Security Appliance technology to improve the perimeter security of its network.

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Martin Bandze
IT Director
BBDO Services

Omnicom stipulated Cisco as one of two options for the data center transformation project, and BBDO Services began a selection process to determine which vendor technology should be deployed. "Following a hands-on workshop and customer briefing event," says Bandze, "we concluded that the FlexPod solution from Cisco and NetApp was technologically superior to anything else in the market."

Specifically, what attracted BBDO to FlexPod was the fact that it presented a pre-designed and pre-validated system that would not require additional Citrix or VMware integration. It was simple to deploy and maintain, and a high level of support was offered. Bandze says: "With other vendors, we would have to deal with problems ourselves. With FlexPod, it's one call and it's fixed."

FlexPod is built on the Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS®) architecture with Cisco Nexus® data center switches, NetApp fiber-attached storage systems, and a range of software infrastructure options from a partner ecosystem. The Cisco UCS B200 Series Blade Servers used in the FlexPod solution rely on the Intel® Xeon® processor 5600 series, which automatically regulates power consumption to combine industry-leading energy efficiency with intelligent performance that adapts to changes in workload.

Furthermore, the Cisco Nexus data center switches offered the potential to greatly reduce data center cabling. Finally, as part of the plans for follow-the-sun networking, the FlexPod architecture would make it easy to link physical and virtual data centers using either Cisco Overlay Transport Virtualization or Cisco FabricPath.

Designed for the most demanding workloads, Cisco UCS servers with Intel processors also deliver maximum performance on a minimum of power automatically, allowing BBDO to adapt to changes in short-term business demands and address requirements for longer-term business growth. With innovative technologies that boost performance, energy efficiency, and virtualization flexibility, dual-processor platforms based on the Intel Xeon processor 5600 series make it easier to deliver additional business services within existing data center facilities.

To allow for DMZ provisioning, BBDO ultimately chose four UCS chassis with Fibre Channel over Ethernet connections and Cisco Fabric Extender Technology to simplify deployment and operation. The switching technologies deployed include Cisco Nexus 7000 and 2000 Series Switches plus a Nexus 1000V Series Soft Switch in the hypervisor, all of which benefit from the Cisco In-Service Software Upgrade feature.

Results

BBDO Services took advantage of the FlexPod migration to move its previous data center to a purpose-built hosted facility in Dusseldorf, with around 100 times more space for growth. Much of the capacity is dedicated to providing about 250 virtual machines with multiple operating systems for the development of Oracle database and software applications for clients. A large Citrix farm, meanwhile, provides access to several hundred virtual machines that serve the needs of administrators and freelance workers.

The migration to the new data center was phased to minimize business impact. "All the administrators are happy with the solution," says Bandze. "We are getting better at using it day-to-day. It's very flexible and offers many new possibilities." The UCS blades help enable compute resources to be repurposed within minutes. And using service profiles, services such as unified communications can keep running even if the underlying hardware needs to be replaced. Bandze says: "We are confident that FlexPod provides a solid platform for growth, a business imperative for BBDO."

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Currently BBDO delivers almost 300 Internet applications on behalf of its clients, and this number, along with the storage capacity required, is expected to grow by 15 percent every year, making it essential to reduce the complexity of the underlying IT infrastructure. Bandze says: "Furthermore, with FlexPod, it's possible to seamlessly change configurations, which allows account teams to act in a more flexible and proactive way for their clients."

The FlexPod deployment also represents a step towards a BBDO global cloud computing strategy, making it easier to tie together compute and storage resources around the globe. In fact, the BBDO Germany data center upgrade has become a reference project for the rest of the business, and could soon be replicated in other countries. The move to Cisco will also be beneficial in giving BBDO people exposure to arguably the leading vendor in the server virtualization arena. "In the end one needs such experience," says Bandze. "It's good for one's professional credentials."

For More Information

To learn more about the Cisco architectures and solutions featured in this case study, please go to:
www.cisco.com/go/flexpod

Product List

FlexPod Components

- Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS)
  - Cisco UCS B200 M2 Blade Servers
- NetApp FAS 3270 storage system

Routing and Switching

- Cisco Nexus 7000 Series Switches
- Cisco Nexus 2000 Series Switches
- Cisco Nexus 1000V Series Soft Switch
- Cisco Fabric Extender Technology

Processors

- Intel® Xeon® processor 5600 series

Storage

- Oracle

Virtualization Software

- VMware vSphere 5 Enterprise Plus
- Citrix Xen 6.5

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