Supercharging Virtual Desktops, Relieving Storage Bottlenecks with Cisco HyperFlex

Erzdiözese Salzburg ⋅ Industry: Religious organization ⋅ Size: 2500 employees ⋅ Location: Salzburg, Austria

Founded in 696 by Saint Rupert, Erzdiözese Salzburg is the oldest existing archdiocese in the German-speaking world. Supporting nearly half a million Catholics across 9715 square kilometers in Austria, the archdiocese includes 210 parishes, eight pastoral centers, and four pilgrimage churches. For more information, visit kirchen.net.

Challenges
• Support an increasing number of users
• Relieve storage bottlenecks
• Improve application performance

Results
• Increased systems availability and reliability
• Accelerated virtual desktop performance by 3X
• Simplified IT operations

Solutions
• Cisco HyperFlex™ system
• Cisco Unified Computing System™ (Cisco UCS®)
• Cisco Nexus® 9000 Series switches

For more information
• Cisco HyperFlex
• Cisco UCS
• Cisco Nexus 9000

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Challenge: Support 2500 users in 250 locations with a lean IT staff

Erzdiözese Salzburg is more than a church. It’s a sprawling organization with a diversity of institutions. In addition to its parishes, the archdiocese runs a collection of schools, counseling centers, and even small hotels for visiting priests. And its operations have grown considerably over the past two decades.

“We had 100 users in 2001,” recalls Alexander Würflinger, IT manager for Erzdiözese Salzburg. “Today, we have 2500 users.”

With a disparity of hardware and software systems spread across 250 locations, the archdiocese’s 14-person IT staff was struggling to support those users. A virtual desktop solution was supposed to provide relief, but problems persisted.

“The connection between our two data centers was overcommitted, which created storage bottlenecks and caused application latency,” Würflinger explains. “It was especially bad in the mornings when everyone would log in—a daily boot storm that slowed everything and everyone down.”

After several unproductive discussions with its storage vendor, the archdiocese’s IT staff learned about Cisco® HyperFlex with fully integrated, all-flash storage. Longtime users and advocates of Cisco UCS, the team decided to test the performance of its Citrix virtual desktops on Cisco HyperFlex.

“It was a significantly different experience,” says Würflinger. “The virtual desktops were three times faster on Cisco HyperFlex than they were on the old infrastructure.”

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Alexander Würflinger
IT Manager, Erzdiözese Salzburg
Simplifying IT operations

Erzdiözese Salzburg deployed Cisco HyperFlex in its two data centers soon thereafter, connecting the two sites with Cisco Nexus 9000 switches. The three-node cluster provides internal, all-flash memory and storage for the archdiocese’s virtual desktops, eliminating the bottlenecks that had been slowing applications to a crawl. And it is integrated with the archdiocese’s other data center systems, including Cisco UCS Mini, IBM storage, and several tape libraries.

“We’re using Cisco HyperFlex just for the virtual desktops now, and we’ll put other apps on it in the future,” Würflinger explains, noting the extended use and value of Cisco UCS Mini, which continues to support the archdiocese’s other applications.

Moving the virtual desktop environment to Cisco HyperFlex was fast and painless, he adds, and IT operations have been greatly simplified ever since.

“It’s all integrated. One system, one management interface,” says Würflinger. “It’s really hands-off, which has freed us from the hardware and allowed us to focus on other tasks.”

Thrilled with its hyperconverged, software-defined infrastructure with all-flash memory, the archdiocese’s IT staff is planning to expand its use of Cisco HyperFlex in the future. The team will place more applications and services on the platform, further integrate and standardize its data centers, and get more granular with user profiles and automated scripts.

“This is the future,” Würflinger says. “Cisco HyperFlex is so much easier and more reliable than traditional systems. It just runs.”

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