Mansfield

Mansfield Oil Uses VMware vSphere® with Operations Management™ to Increase IT Utilization with Visibility into the Health of IT Systems

Mansfield Oil, a large, fast-growing leader in the energy supply, logistics, and services industry, relies on VMware vSphere® with Operations Management™ to virtualize its IT resources and monitor the health and utilization of its IT systems. The company is now able to fix IT issues proactively, before they become problems; identify underutilized resources and reclaim them as needed; and accurately forecast the need for additional IT resources.

Based in Gainesville, Georgia, Mansfield Oil provides fuel and energy to more than 3,700 commercial customers, 440 school districts, 770 counties, 590 cities, and 800 state and province locations across the United States and Canada. The company supports every level of the energy supply and management process.

The Challenge

Mansfield Oil adopted virtualization more than five years ago and has since virtualized 98 to 99 percent of its environment, according to Hercu Rabsatt, director of infrastructure & service management at Mansfield Oil. The company's virtualized environment supports core business applications including a custom .NET-based enterprise resource planning (ERP) system, databases, Web servers, and just about everything else.

Yet after virtualizing the infrastructure, Mansfield Oil's IT team found that it lacked critical visibility into system capacity and utilization. This led to inefficient, reactive problem resolution. "We just didn't know the status of our environment, so we couldn't be proactive. A business team would come in and tell us their system was down, and then we'd react," explained Rabsatt.

In addition, Rabsatt wanted better information to improve IT resource planning and accelerate speed to value. "Supporting the business requires us to maximize IT investments as well as understand the status of those investments and resources," Rabsatt said. "I wanted predictable IT. I wanted to know where our resources were being utilized." Moving forward, Rabsatt concluded, "We have to be able to predict what our capacity is going to be month over month, year over year."

Additional challenges included an inability to quantify the system resources that were saved when a system was decommissioned, as well as a lack of system portability due to system dependence on specific hardware.

INDUSTRY
Energy / Fuel supply and distribution

LOCATION
Gainesville, Georgia

KEY CHALLENGES
- Lack of visibility into IT utilization rates and capacity
- Inability to predict IT resource needs
- Slow and reactive problem recognition and resolution

SOLUTION
To better monitor its VMware vSphere-virtualized IT environment, Mansfield Oil upgraded to VMware vSphere with Operations Management. By coupling health monitoring and performance analytics with real-time visibility into the company's vSphere infrastructure, the solution enables Mansfield Oil to optimize their virtualized systems, improve resource utilization, and better plan for the future.

BUSINESS BENEFITS
- Proactive management of emerging system performance issues
- Accurate forecasts of IT resource needs over time
- Flexibility and scalability to deliver new business value
- Reduced costs and improved agility with portability of systems

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VMWARE FOOTPRINT

- VMware vSphere with Operations Management 5.5
- VMware Horizon 6 (in pilot program)

APPLICATIONS VIRTUALIZED

- 99 percent of all IT systems virtualized, including a custom .NET-based ERP system

PARTNER

- ProSys

The Solution

To more easily keep track of the status of its VMware vSphere-virtualized IT environment, Mansfield Oil upgraded to VMware vSphere with Operations Management. The solution includes two integrated components: the vSphere virtualization platform, and the VMware vRealize® Operations™ system for unified operations management.

The solution provides control over performance, capacity, and configuration, with predictive analytics that drive proactive responses with integrated smart alerts and policy-based automation. By coupling health monitoring and performance analytics with real-time visibility into the company's vSphere infrastructure, the operations management solution provides Rabsatt and his team with the ability to optimize their virtualized systems and improve resource utilization.

When Rabsatt's team considered their options, choosing VMware "was really a no-brainer," he said. "VMware is the market leader when it comes to virtualization, and we have a VMware environment. We wanted to build a core IT ecosystem that the business could stand upon, and VMware is part of that foundation, along with Cisco and NetApp hardware. They all play very well together," Rabsatt explained.

Mansfield Oil's Tier-1 IT partner, ProSys, played a critical role in both the decision-making and implementation process. "We worked hand in hand with ProSys, every step of the way. They help us keep our ear to the street about leading-edge technologies that really maximize ROI."

Business Benefits

Since upgrading to VMware vSphere with Operations Management two years ago, Mansfield Oil reports that it has achieved dramatic improvements in its IT environment. Visibility into system utilization, granular capacity, and other performance metrics have helped to better align IT with the needs of the business. Benefits gained from the solution include:

Proactive management of emerging system performance issues

Rabsatt's team can now identify IT issues quickly, isolate problems, and systematically remediate the root causes to restore service levels. Alerts automatically inform IT staff of any emerging issues that need to be looked at, helping the team resolve issues before they become problems for end users and the business. A comprehensive dashboard provides visibility into past and present IT asset metrics, including resource health, risk, and efficiency scores. A centralized control console provides platform-wide management and the ability to pinpoint, diagnose, and resolve issues.

Accurate forecasts of IT resource needs over time

"Capacity planning drove our adoption of VMware vSphere with Operations Management," explained Rabsatt, "and we now know where we stand in terms of IT capacity and utilization, and where we are headed."

Flexibility and scalability to deliver new business value

"The flexibility and scalability we have gained from VMware enables us to be a true partner to the business." In addition, improved resource planning avoids CapEx surprises.

Reduced costs and improved agility with portability of systems

The solution has given Mansfield Oil the ability to move systems between data centers without moving hardware, making the relocation of systems faster, easier, and less costly. For example, the company moved their custom ERP system to a different location overnight without a problem.

Looking Ahead

Rabsatt is currently planning to upgrade to VMware vSphere with Operations Management 6, and move toward the cloud. The IT staff is piloting VMware Horizon® 6 to provide virtual desktops, in addition to exploring solutions that will prepare Mansfield Oil for, Rabsatt envisions, "a future with a Software-Defined Data Center and a hybrid cloud architecture."

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