



Nexans Benelux Relieves Tension with VMware Software

Global leader in cabling solutions saves more than €60,000 with VMware ESX Server and VirtualCenter; CPU usage per server increases from 2 percent to 40 percent

RESULTS

- Increased server utilization from five percent to nearly 100 percent
- Consolidated servers by a 30:1 ratio
- Reduced data center space by a 20:1 ratio
- Reduced equipment costs by two-thirds
- Optimized server management and instant server provisioning with VirtualCenter
- Can easily perform software upgrades with no downtime using VMotion

Virtual Infrastructure Takes the Strain for Overstretched IT Department

The Nexans Group is the worldwide leader in the cabling industry. With an industrial presence in 29 countries and commercial activities in 65 countries, Nexans employs 17,000 people, including 450 researchers. The company had sales in 2003 of €4bn and is listed on the Paris stock exchange. It provides cabling solutions for almost any scenario, from telecommunications and healthcare to the railways and space travel.

Nexans Benelux is responsible for sales and logistics for the region, and is made up of a number of subsidiary companies, including Nexans Cabling Solutions and Opticable. It oversees six production facilities that make advanced fibre-optic, copper, high-voltage, aeronautical and telecoms switching cables.

These divisions rely on the regional headquarters in Belgium for a large part of their IT infrastructure. Employees use a variety of applications and tools to do their work, including FINeChain, SAP, Oracle, Business Objects, and SQL. These run on a variety of operating systems, including a number of Linux and Windows versions. This complex ICT environment required constant maintenance and suffered from repeated downtime – both scheduled and unscheduled – for updates, new profile creation and ongoing repairs.

The situation soon became critical and the ICT team was faced with a choice: either spend money on buying new servers and maintaining them, or make more efficient use of the existing server infrastructure. This decision was made all the more pressing by an influx of new staff at Nexans, which was pushing the capacity of the current IT infrastructure to its limits.

VMware ESX Server Transforms Efficiency and Manageability of ICT Systems

The Benelux ICT department initiated a study to evaluate a range of solutions and ensure that they met three key criteria: compatibility with the current FINeCHAIN application; improved efficiency and reliability of existing applications and databases; and the ability to support growth in user numbers. The team considered adding individual new servers to expand capacity, and the option of simply replacing the entire infrastructure.

After extensive evaluation, Nexans chose not to go with either option, but to install VMware ESX Server with VirtualCenter to improve server usage and improve manageability of systems. Using this new virtual infrastructure, the Nexans Benelux ICT team has seen the following key benefits:

“We faced the challenge of finding a solution that was properly compatible with our heterogeneous environment. VMware virtual infrastructure has taken up the strain for us and we can continue using all of our existing software on the same hardware, without needing to worry about increasing user numbers. We can now provision a new virtual server in less than an hour. Application deployment is also now much quicker, and takes barely an hour, instead of the four or five hours per server previously.”

*Tim Vailllemans,
Office Systems Architect, Nexans Benelux*



VMWARE ESX SERVER AT WORK

- One HP ProLiant DL760 G2 8P 2.7GHz-2MB L3 Cache, 28GB RAM
- Guest operating systems: Microsoft® Windows® 2000 Server, Windows 2003, and Red Hat Linux 9.0
- Two MSA1000 SANs mirrored with Veritas
- FINECHAIN application integrated with SAP R/3
- Multiple Citrix MetaFrame Presentation Server implementations for application deployment.
- Oracle Database datawarehouse
- VMware Enterprise VIP Reseller Econocom

- **Substantial cost reductions.** Nexans has saved at least €60,000 in hardware costs by not having to buy additional servers. Installation and configuration of all software was completed in less than a week, with the result that the company has also made significant savings in staff time spent administering systems.
- **Improved server efficiency.** VMware ESX Server has optimised server utilisation, increasing CPU usage from 2 percent to 40 percent. This improved processor efficiency means that the company can provision new virtual servers instantly and does not need to purchase additional physical servers to meet growing user demands.
- **Simplified IT management** VMware VirtualCenter speeds the process of bringing new users online and enables the ICT team to implement new applications very quickly. By using VMware technologies to create a virtual infrastructure, maintenance and management of the company's highly diversified systems has been dramatically simplified.

VMware ESX Server Simplifies Maintenance and Management of Applications

The Nexans Benelux ICT team worked with VMware Enterprise VIP reseller Econocom to implement VMware ESX Server and VirtualCenter. VMware technology has enabled the company to consolidate both the hardware and software it uses, and has also significantly improved CPU usage.

"We faced the challenge of finding a solution that was properly compatible with our heterogeneous environment. VMware virtual infrastructure has taken up the strain for us and we can continue using all of our existing software on the same hardware, without needing to worry about increasing user numbers," said Tim Vailemans, office systems architect/administrator for Nexans.

An important benefit of VMware VirtualCenter is that it seamlessly and safely manages testing of applications within the production environment. This is possible through deployment of additional virtual machines that are used for testing, and then activating new applications and updates.

An additional advantage is that the ICT team can now demand more from their existing servers. System managers can allocate resources on demand, and can identify CPU bottlenecks as they occur. This improves the usability of both old and new applications and software tools.

"We can now provision a new virtual server in less than an hour. Application deployment is also now much quicker, and takes barely an hour, instead of the four or five hours per server previously," said Vailemans.

Vailemans also has plans to extend the use of VMware technology at Nexans. In a second phase of the IT improvement project, VMware technologies including VMotion will be used to provide seamless onsite disaster recovery and VirtualCenter will be used as a company-wide monitoring tool.

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