



“As per our hardware leasing strategy, every piece of hardware over \$500 has to be on a lease. So every physical piece of hardware gets reconfigured every three years, and re-associating software applications with new hardware can be very taxing for us. But virtual appliances don’t have that problem — they can move from physical host to physical host without any issues.”

– Dallas LaRose
Enterprise Systems Supervisor
GSD&M Idea City

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Challenge

GSD&M Idea City wanted an application, running in a virtualized environment, to reliably and securely transfer very large files between staff and clients.

Solution

Idea City deployed the Accellion Secure File Transfer Virtual Appliance, running on VMware® Infrastructure 3, to easily transfer even files as large as 20GB.

VMware at Work

VMware Infrastructure 3 Enterprise, featuring:

- ESX Server 3.5 with VMFS
- VirtualCenter 2.5
- VMware VMotion™
- VMware Converter
- VMware Workstation 6.0
- VMware Player

Deployment environment

- ESX Server running in an environment of Dell PowerEdge 6850 and HP DL380 servers
- EMC Clariion CX 700 storage array
- Guest operating systems: Red Hat Linux, Windows Server 2003 and Windows XP
- Applications: Microsoft SQL Server databases, Microsoft Exchange Servers, Microsoft Office SharePoint Servers, file and print servers and internal applications
- Virtual appliance: Accellion Secure File Transfer

GSD&M Idea City

GSD&M Idea City is an advertising agency that has helped grow some of the world’s most respected brands. A subsidiary of the Omnicom Group, it has more than 500 employees and annual billings of \$1.5 billion.

As an advertising agency, Idea City frequently exchanges extremely large video and audio files with customers and other media agencies. With typical file sizes ranging from 200MB to 500MB, and some reaching 6GB to 8GB, these materials are too large to be processed as email attachments. Idea City needed an efficient and cost-effective method to securely exchange these proprietary creative works.

For several years, the company used a homegrown web-based application to transfer large files. However, frequent code changes and manual maintenance made it costly to support. Worse, it was prone to failure. Employees were turning to a courier service to send critical files, often because they didn’t believe the application was capable of reliably delivering them. Overnight courier shipping was slower than electronic file transfer and more expensive. Dallas LaRose, Enterprise Systems Supervisor, knew that his team had to provide a reliable method that users would trust.

During the same time period, Idea City made the strategic decision to virtualize its IT environment. The data center was expanding as the company grew, which led to spiraling requirements for space, cooling and power. So the company standardized on VMware® Infrastructure 3 (VI3), putting all of its internal users on systems provisioned by virtual machines.

“Any new project that we bring in house we try to find a solution that works with VMware,” says LaRose. Thus the company was particularly interested in virtual appliances, which are prebuilt, preconfigured, ready-to-run enterprise applications that are packaged along with an optimized operating system inside one or more virtual machines. “Virtual appliances running on VI3 model really fit our “VMware first” virtualization strategy overall,” says LaRose.

So to solve its file transfer needs, Idea City looked at the Accellion Secure File Transfer Virtual Appliance and decided to deploy it. The company also explored the Biscom Delivery Server and a hardware appliance solution from Accellion.

Having a virtual appliance ready to go “was at the top of the list for deciding factors,” says LaRose. “We prefer virtual appliances for the same reasons we prefer virtual machines over physical machines: ease of deployment, management, flexibility, power and efficiency fitting in to our data center environment. The virtual appliance was faster and easier to deploy than the alternatives. Just having the appliance configured out of the box is a big benefit for us. We save time by not having to read through documentation or configure the base-level operating system. Another benefit is that it’s not necessary to go through the patching process ourselves.”

With the Accellion Secure File Transfer appliance, Idea City ensures that operating systems and applications are up to date by subscribing to routine software updates. “Accellion is very good at communicating when those updates are out, and providing a

one-touch update for everything that runs in that appliance,” says LaRose. This yields benefits in both increased security and time savings, because otherwise Idea City employees would spend more time maintaining those patches.

Idea City also appreciates the increased monitoring abilities that help identify virtual machines operating outside their necessary parameters. With VMware VMotion™, IT staff members can make adjustments to those machines, and even switch out hardware to improve performance without any system downtime. And with VMware’s remote administration features, those staffers can administer all servers running in the VMware virtual center environment from any location.

Virtualization has also improved the provisioning process for new machines. Idea City can use a template to provision new virtual machines just one click away, rather than buying and configuring a new physical machine weeks of configuration away. IdeaCity’s IT department is now able to grow as it needs, instead of being able to grow only when budget get approved.

Going forward, Idea City expects to evaluate additional virtual appliances from the VMware Virtual Appliance Marketplace (<http://www.vmware.com/appliances>), probably starting with those in the areas of network management and security. Since virtual appliances have been a real time-saver for the IT department, Idea City now asks its vendors if they support VMware and if they offer software applications as virtual appliances.

Results

- Compared to licensed software solutions, reduced the configuration time of the Accellion virtual appliance from eight hours to one hour
- Reduced configuration and documentation related support calls to software vendors, saving another 20 person-hours
- Gained flexibility to eliminate performance constraints by allocating as much hardware as needed to the virtual appliance running on V13
- Achieved enhanced security with routine updates from Accellion that ensure the operating system and applications are up to date. Saved IT labor hours spent maintaining application and operating system-level security patches
- Improved the software update management process via email notifications from Accellion that one-touch updates are available on its website
- Reduced labor burden through remote administration, allowing staff to monitor all virtual machines and this virtual appliance through VMware Virtual Center

