

Consona Corp.

PROFILE



Industry

Software

Corporate Headquarters

Indianapolis, Ind.

Employees

700+

Annual Revenue

\$700 Million

Website

<http://www.consona.com>

THE NUMBERS

- 4,500 external, 700+ internal customers
- 10 to 37 virtual machine requests weekly
- IT resource requests processed 89% faster

IN BRIEF

Objective

Consona's IT department needed to accommodate business growth and meet the demands of external customers as well as internal R&D teams for fast provisioning of IT capacity.

Solution

The company is optimizing their internal data centers (3) worldwide and utilizing VMware and BlueLock to accommodate the explosive growth associated with Research and Development, and after-sales support.

Business Impact

- Hybrid cloud technology enables application portability between BlueLock and Consona VMware environments.
- Flexibility to expand or shrink capacity as needed.
- Fast provisioning of test and development environments for multi-tiered applications with large databases.
- Avoids need to expand Consona's physical datacenter footprint.

Global CRM, ERP Software IT Department Supports R&D Teams, Delivers SaaS Through VMware Technology, BlueLock Virtual Datacenters

"Consona's need to be flexible and nimble is immense. VMware technology and BlueLock Virtual Datacenters in the public cloud enable fast deployment, management ease, and the ability to expand and shrink capacity as needed."

— Kristen Hayes, Director of Global Infrastructure, Consona Corp.

A leading global provider of CRM and ERP software, Consona Corp. was growing as a company and running out of datacenter space. Inside the company, product developers need fast provisioning of the resources they rely on to do their jobs. Consona customers, meanwhile, expect the company to meet stringent performance SLAs.

Consona's answer to these IT needs is a particularly flexible approach to virtualization. The company's three datacenters are largely virtualized on the VMware platform. In addition, Consona contracts with VMware vCloud Datacenter Service provider BlueLock for Virtual Datacenter services. The result is fast provisioning, robust performance and the flexibility to shift workloads, and add or decrease capacity as needed, in the hybrid cloud.

"We have application portability between clouds and can expand or shrink resources as needed," says Kristen Hayes, Consona's director of global infrastructure. "That brings cost efficiencies, performance improvements, and the business scalability to meet growing demand from internal and external customers."

Global Organization Requires Flexible IT Resources

Based in Indianapolis, Indiana, Consona provides software solutions that automate business-critical tasks ranging from marketing to materials management. If you've ever had a live chat on a company website, you might have been using Consona software to do so. The company both sells software and delivers some of its solutions as Software as a Service (SaaS) in a cloud environment. Its 4,500 customers operate in a variety of industries, from retail to automobile manufacturing, and range in size from small businesses to Global 2000 enterprises. Consona employs more than 700 workers in 40 locations worldwide.

The company maintains three of its own datacenters, two in the United States and one in Bangalore, India. The main internal IT customers are Consona software developers, shared services departments, and tech consulting. Each product line has R&D teams for pre-sale development and post-sale releases. Hayes' IT organization receives from 10 to 37 virtual-machine requests a week. In addition, it delivers SaaS to external customers. Since 2001, Consona has grown tremendously through acquisitions. Its 2010 purchase of open-source and cloud ERP provider Compiere Inc., gave Consona its first cloud-ready ERP solution and entry into the distribution market.

With Consona running out of IT capacity, Hayes chose to pursue a cloud hosting solution rather than make the capital investment to expand the company's own datacenters, and to respond with speed to internal environment requests. An early foray into Amazon EC2 still supports some product lines serving their customers. However, Consona found the solution limited when it came to complex applications and 32-bit clients. Consona developers

“The compatibility of BlueLock’s Virtual Datacenter solution with our in-house VMware technology enables application portability between clouds.”

Kristen Hayes
 Director of Global Infrastructure
 Consona Corp.

frequently work with three-tier applications of large Microsoft SQL databases, web front ends and application layers in the middle. The fixed-size, non-VMware cloud solution did not allow on-the-fly addition of resources – such as more RAM, CPU or hard-drive space – to the development, test or production environments for these applications. Instead, Consona had to create new instances every time and transfer data over. The process was cumbersome and costly.

Consona sought a more flexible solution. It wanted to adjust cloud-based workloads as needed, with resource pooling giving the ability to consume varying service tiers based on business needs. And it wanted a cloud platform compatible with its internal VMware environment to allow application portability and the comfort of mitigating risk of vendor lock-in.

That’s where BlueLock came in. Consona jumped onboard BlueLock’s VMware vCloud Datacenter certified service in October 2010 and today runs six virtual datacenters in the environment. With BlueLock Virtual Datacenter, Consona is able to leverage their existing investments in VMware—both from a technology and expertise perspective.

BlueLock Provides Cloud Hosting

Also based in Indianapolis, BlueLock is one of three certified VMware vCloud Datacenter providers in North America. The company delivers enterprise-class Virtual Datacenters using VMware vSphere and VMware vCenter management Tools with VMware vCloud Director as the cloud delivery platform. BlueLock has implemented vCloud Connector for vCloud Director which allows Consona to view and manage its existing VMware environment and BlueLock Virtual Datacenters in Consona’s existing vSphere Client control panel. BlueLock’s team of experts who provide 24x7 monitoring and additional support and management of the cloud environment take a load off Consona’s IT team.

“It’s like my own datacenter, except without the capital expenditure and management complexity,” Hayes says. “I can access everything from a single management console, spin up virtual machines, create catalogs of virtual images and grant access to end users – or I can count on BlueLock’s client service team to get the job done for us.”

VMware vCloud Director pools virtual-infrastructure resources and delivers them to users as a catalog-based service. Consona can create a virtual datacenter with associated resources – images, operating systems, memory, processing power – then assign access to it. Consona end users then select from those catalogs via self-service the instances they need for development and test environments. The applications used internally include proprietary knowledge management and support-desk tools that some external customers also access.

Thanks to VMware vSphere features like vMotion, Consona says, it no longer matters where in the hybrid cloud a virtual machine resides. The solution allows Consona to move workloads among datacenters with compatible management and security. Storage capacity can be expanded as needed – a particular advantage to Consona, which has to keep terabytes of source code essentially forever.

The Numbers: Increasing Capacity, Decreasing Cost

The advantages of the hybrid cloud environment translate into measurable gains. In the pay-as-you-go BlueLock environment, Consona pays only for the compute and storage space it uses. With no need to invest heavily in new physical servers, power, cooling and floor space, Consona’s datacenter costs change only incrementally. Server warranty costs are down 16 percent. Additional cost and environmental savings derive from lower power consumption and cooling requirements.

IT service to end users is faster. Before moving to the VMware hybrid cloud, the Consona help desk typically ran approximately 300 open cases at a time of resource requests — and it took three or four weeks to fulfill multiple requests. Today, the typical case load is down

to 70, and fulfillment is accomplished within 3 days once requirements are confirmed. Consona also is better positioned to meet customer SLAs both for fast deployment and system uptime in the “five nines.”

“We’ve consolidated to fewer physical servers in our internal datacenters, reduced our hardware maintenance burden and gained the flexibility to expand and shrink capacity on demand,” Hayes says.

Next Steps: Management Advancements, Desktop Virtualization

Freed from much of the burden of managing a physical infrastructure, Hayes turns her attention to further benefiting Consona end users. She is updating internal datacenters to a newer version of vSphere, and plans soon to roll out VMware vCenter CapacityIQ to optimize capacity. She is interested in VMware vCenter Chargeback, initially for visibility into costs by department which will be beneficial during Consona’s budget planning cycle. Business-critical applications such as Microsoft Exchange are already virtualized at Consona. More applications and services are being virtualized continually and Hayes estimates internal datacenters eventually will be 75 percent virtualized.

VMware representatives have been extremely helpful, she adds, in providing technical support and presenting technology roadmaps to aid Consona’s IT strategy planning.

A key near-term initiative is desktop virtualization with VMware View. Consona is creating a test group of end users within their organization, as well as members of the sales force who gain system access through terminal servers. “We’re looking for a way to deliver updates, patches and images to the workforce worldwide,” Hayes says.

Ultimately what virtualization does for Consona is enhance business competitiveness. The company can operate efficiently, absorb acquired companies with speed and support its own staff with IT resources to develop, deploy and enhance products. Consona customers, meanwhile, are assured fast deployment, service reliability and constantly advancing software products and services.

“Consona is growing in size and constantly adding new products or upgrading existing ones,” Hayes says. “Our need to be flexible and nimble is immense. Cloud-based services enable us to establish environments and deploy applications quickly. VMware technology allows my IT organization to deliver better service, faster to internal and external customers. What’s more, the BlueLock hosted solution makes our lives easier.”

IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW		
<p>VMware Products:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> VMware vSphere™ 4 - VMware vMotion® - VMware Storage vMotion - VMware High Availability - VMware Fault Tolerance - VMware DRS VMware vCenter™ Server VMware vCloud™ Director 	<p>Applications:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Microsoft Exchange 2003, 2010 Proprietary in-house applications <p>Partner:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> BlueLock 	<p>Platform:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> EMC Storage Wide range of operating systems

