CUSTOMER CASE STUDY

Experian PLC

PROFILE

Industry
Global Information Services

Corporate Headquarters
Dublin, Ireland

Employees
Approx. 15,000

Annual Revenue
$4.2 Billion in 2011

Website
www.experianplc.com

IN BRIEF

Objective
Experian demands constant innovation and nimble response to markets to maintain its profitability and competitive edge. Its IT infrastructure team must support its developers' efforts to meet the business' aggressive time-to-market requirements.

Solution
A cloud-based infrastructure-as-a-service model for Experian's test and development environments will allow developers to quickly and flexibly self-provision IT resources when they need them.

Business Impact
- Provisioning times, already slashed from weeks to days through virtualization, now further cut to minutes
- Developers can more easily collaborate; business units can leverage IT builds from other lines of business
- Private cloud and VMware vShield security functionality ensure IT resources are controlled and protected

With VMware vCloud, Experian Evolves Virtualization into Private Cloud

"VMware vCloud technology will allow Experian to offer an internal, self-service cloud to our development organization, leading to faster project turnaround and better levels of IT service."

—Alan Russell, VP Global Infrastructure Systems, Experian

Consumers know Experian® as a provider of credit reporting services. Lenders and other businesses know Experian as a provider of information, analytical tools and marketing services to organisations in over 80 countries around the world. Regardless of whether it targets business or consumer markets, however, Experian's core focus is the same: data.

"Data is our business," notes David Janusz, IT Architect, Experian.

The company's "special sauce," of course, is its ability to leverage that data in ways that deliver customer value. Experian's global workforce includes over 2,700 Global Product and Technology Services professionals. These IT professionals are tasked with helping its businesses design, implement and run the company's broad portfolio of B2B and B2C service offerings.

To enhance their support of this extensive services development organization, Experian is now implementing VMware vCloud Director.

Leveraging the Existing Virtualized Infrastructure

Experian has known for some time that it wanted to move to an infrastructure-as-a-service approach to provisioning IT resources.

"Our developers are very aware of the benefits offered by public cloud service providers," Janusz explains. "Cloud computing supports the flexibility and agility our developers need to decrease time-to-market and respond more nimbly to business requests. We decided we must offer our own internal cloud computing service to deliver these benefits without compromising data security."

What Experian did not want to do, however, was to build the service itself. "We knew we wanted certain functionality, like a self-service portal, but had concerns about building it ourselves. We wanted an out-of-the-box solution."

Experian is a long-time VMware customer; its x86 infrastructure is approximately 46% virtualized under VMware vSphere. So when Janusz's team learned about VMware vCloud, they decided to give the solution a closer look.

They liked what they saw. "VMware vCloud met our criteria," Janusz says. "It comes with a pre-existing portal with a user-friendly interface. The back end lets you publish applications that are offered through a catalogue. Offerings can be configured to meet differing levels of service. The solution met our needs from a security standpoint. And it ties into our VMware vSphere estate, so it leverages our existing virtualized infrastructure."

Experian decided to deploy a test case instance of VMware vCloud technology to validate its initial evaluation of the solution functionality. It engaged the VMware Professional Services Organization to design and implement a proof of concept. "Our

"Virtualization is the cornerstone of cloud computing. Moving into the cloud lets us build upon our virtual landscape and offer new services to our business."

David Janusz, IT Architect, Experian

VMware consultants did an excellent job brainstorming with us about our options for configuring and deploying the solution," Janusz says. "Then they walked us through the build, assisted with the configuration, and helped us design our test cases."

VMware also helped Experian develop presentations for its business units to help raise awareness about the project and its objectives.

"We were able to implement the test case much more quickly, with VMware's assistance, than we could have if we'd done it on our own," Janusz notes. "VMware really helped us with the decisions we needed to make about how to structure the test."

Self-Provisioning IT Environments in Minutes

Implementing the VMware vCloud test case instance proved straightforward. "We were able to leverage our existing development infrastructure to get it going quickly," says Janusz.

The team designed the environment's service catalogue from approved images. Some were fairly straightforward, with simple components: Windows or Linux virtual machines. Other images were complex LAMP (Linux/Apache/MySQL/PHP) stack environments, such as Citrix or Content Management System vApps (virtual applications). "VMware vCloud allowed us to easily replicate full production environments comprising web servers, application servers and virtual firewalls," Janusz notes. "We were able to work out all of the kinks, such as what ports need to be open, so that the virtual environments would be ready for one-click deployment."

As it configured the instances, the team solicited input from developers via site visits and teleconference meetings. "We wanted our developers to understand what we were doing and give them the opportunity to take an active role in the project."

Once the test instance of VMware vCloud was live, selected Experian developers were invited to try it. They found that they could provision IT environments -- whether they were simple or complex -- in just minutes. "Our developers' responses were very positive," Janusz notes. "Developers became comfortable immediately with VMware vCloud technology's self-service provisioning portal. They found the interface intuitive and user-friendly."

On the back end, the VMware vCloud implementation performed exactly as promised. "We just turned it on and it was live," Janusz says.

Dynamic Development Environment

With the VMware vCloud proof of concept a solid success, the team now plans to fully realize its vision: it is building a private cloud-based infrastructure-as-a-service model to support its test and development organization.

Experian anticipates a number of benefits once this full VMware vCloud architecture is in place. "We will have a dynamic development environment," Janusz says. "Our developers will be able to quickly choose from pre-existing templates of approved configurations of operating systems and applications software. They'll pick what they need, deploy it, run with it and destroy it if they need to."

Because developers will be able to self-provision environments, provisioning will require less time on the part of Experian's central IT group, freeing it to focus on other priorities. Lower value tasks, like defining standard image configurations, will only need to be done once, instead of repeated each time a developer requires that particular environment.

Once fully deployed, the VMware vCloud portal will be available to all of Experian's developers worldwide. In some cases, it will help foster collaboration among

"With VMware vCloud, we'll be able to optimize levels of service to our users' needs. It will also give us portability. If a development effort moves into a new phase and needs higher performance storage, for example, we'll be able to move those developers to a different service level. This will let us allocate our high performance architecture more cost-effectively"

David Janusz, IT Architect, Experian

developers and lines of business. Business units will be able to more easily repurpose virtual applications used by other business units.

VMware vCloud Is the Next Phase in Virtualization

At the same time, the VMware solution will also permit Experian to maintain effective security controls over its cloud resources. This is of critical importance to the company. Its survival depends on customers trusting that the data it gathers and shares is valid, clean and protected. "Our business units need access to pre-existing development objects, but in some cases we need to keep them behind firewalls," Janusz explains. "With VMware vCloud, we can do that. We don't have to worry about unintentionally exposing resources."

VMware vCloud technology will also ensure that Experian knows who uses the cloud's virtual machines (VMs). "All VMs are logged centrally," Janusz says. "We will know who requests them. We can trace their use if any issues arise."

Experian anticipates leveraging VMware vCenter Chargeback with its VMware vCloud deployment. This will allow the company to hone its understanding of how IT resources are consumed, which will in turn support better planning and insight into the costs associated with developing and maintaining its software products.

Janusz also views Experian's VMware vCloud director implementation as a way for the company to deepen its understanding of cloud technology in general -- including the public cloud. "We're trying to master the implications of cloud technology internally, first," he says. "This will give us the expertise and insight to better understand the risks and benefits of public cloud services."

Perhaps most important to Experian, however, is that by streamlining the provisioning of IT resources, VMware vCloud will reduce project timelines and reduce time-to-market. "By implementing VMware virtualization technology, we sped up provisioning considerably," Janusz notes. "VMware vCloud director is the next step." At one time, provisioning development resources could take as long as 11 weeks. Virtualization trimmed that cycle to a matter of days. VMware vCloud, in many cases, will cut provisioning time even further, to mere minutes.

"Innovating is a key business priority and competitive advantage for Experian, and our developers are often under a lot of time-to-market pressure," says Janusz. "By streamlining provisioning, VMware vCloud will help alleviate some of that.

"Implementing infrastructure-as-a-service through VMware vCloud is the next phase in the evolution of virtualization technology," Janusz concludes. "This technology puts even more of the power of virtualization into the hands of VMware customers, and it does so with intelligence and ease."

IMPLEMENTATION OVERVIEW

VMware Products
VMware vCloud
VMware vSphere 4
VMware vShield
VMware vCenter Chargeback

VMware Services
Consulting
Project Management

Applications
Microsoft® Windows
Linux
Apache
MySQL
PHP
Oracle databases

Platform
IBM System x3850 M2 enterprise servers
EMC CLARiiON CX-220 storage systems

vmware

VMware, Inc. 3401 Hillview Avenue Palo Alto CA 94304 USA Tel 877-486-9273 Fax 650-427-5001 www.vmware.com