US SIGNAL EMPOWERS CUSTOMERS TO CONSUME RESOURCES ON-DEMAND AND ACCELERATES BUSINESS GROWTH WITH VCLOUD DIRECTOR

US SIGNAL

INDUSTRY
CLOUD AND MANAGED SERVICES PROVIDER

LOCATION
HEADQUARTERED IN GRAND RAPIDS, MI

DATA CENTER LOCATIONS:

• OAK BROOK, IL
• INDIANAPOLIS, IN
• SOUTH BEND, IN
• GRAND RAPIDS, MI (EAST)
• GRAND RAPIDS, MI (SOUTH)
• SOUTHFIELD, MI
• COLUMBUS, OH
• MADISON, WI

KEY CHALLENGES

• Meet customer demand for self-service

• Provide resource visibility and administration in a single pane of glass

• Speed customer on-boarding and provisioning

• Accelerate the monetization of new services

• Enable secure multi-tenancy

• Avoid custom portal development

SOLUTION
US Signal deployed VMware vCloud Director cloud management platform to enable true multi-tenancy across multiple data centers with automated customer self-service.

When US Signal deployed vCloud Director it not only gave customers visibility into their resources with a single pane of glass, it also avoided costly custom development and provides a foundation for the business to rapidly onboard customers and monetize new services.

US Signal is a leading IT solutions provider, offering secure and reliable network, cloud hosting, colocation, data protection, and disaster recovery services — all powered by its expansive, robust fiber network. US Signal also helps customers optimize their IT resources by providing managed and professional services that operate as an extension of customers' internal IT processes and staff.

A VMware vCloud® Air™ Network (vCAN) partner, US Signal provides its suite of services to both enterprise and Managed Services Providers (MSPs) on VMware's leading virtualization and cloud computing technology.

The Challenge
When US Signal first entered the cloud market it relied on a virtual private server platform that didn't allow customers to control resources on a per VM basis. Customers couldn't change resources as needed - whether it was CPU, RAM, or storage for a specific VM - and that created significant management overhead. At the same time, each VM was highly compartmentalized and that made it difficult to determine the aggregate total resources being used.

With customers in highly regulated markets and stringent compliance requirements, US Signal also needed a true multi-tenant solution that enabled true segmentation of customers and their private networks. Ideally, US Signal would deploy a single platform to host secure virtual data centers that could be consumed by multiple tenants. Unfortunately, US Signal quickly discovered that many networking and virtualization solutions approach multi-tenancy from an enterprise-only perspective, which creates segmentation between internal departments, but doesn't meet the needs of a service provider with customers that must meet compliance and regulatory demands.

As it explored alternative platforms, US Signal sought a scalable solution that would give customers visibility into their resources via a single pane of glass. This could reduce the time to onboard new customers, it would also contribute to a better customer experience. US Signal recognized that a solution that enabled rapid provisioning could accelerate the monetization of new services, and increase operational efficiency. Of course, the platform also needed to be proven and mature, with reference architectures and APIs to support workload deployment and reporting.

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DERRIN RUMMELT,
DIRECTOR,
CLOUD ENGINEERING

BUSINESS BENEFITS

• Meets customer self-service and security needs

• Avoids $100k+ in custom development

• Accelerates customer onboarding and business growth

• Enables infrastructure to be ready for easy consumption in minutes

• Ensures workload security and automated resource control

VMWARE FOOTPRINT
• vCloud Director
• vSphere
• vCenter Server
• vCenter Chargeback Manager
• NSX®
• Multiple production and disaster recovery data centers

"Our customers want and need the ability to change resources as their businesses dictate," explains Derrin Rummelt, Director, Cloud Engineering. "We needed to give customers a self-managed platform that enables them to manage and deploy workloads and applications in multiple geographic locations at the same time. When we moved to VMware vCloud Director it was an immediate game changer."

The Solution

As a member of the VMware vCloud Air Network, today US Signal leverages VMware to provide customers with pools of virtual resources, which customers manage via a single pane of glass with vCloud Director. US Signal is able to design, migrate and on-board solutions for customers, and then enable them to run workloads on the platform, layering in managed services such as data protection , security and other services. By taking on the management of the underlying infrastructure and all of their applications in multiple data centers with vCloud Director, US Signal enables customer success.

vCloud Director allows US Signal to take advantage of different allocation models based upon customer requirements. For example, the reservation model in vCloud Director fits enterprise customers well because they can oversubscribe the resources, which allows for greater scale and customization of their environment. Managed Services Providers who provide their own cloud services may fit better into an allocation model in vCloud Director because they don't require the highest levels of resource availability and it allows them to drive down costs and improve margins. For more traditional pay-as-you-go customers, vCloud Director allows them to pay for exactly what they use.

"We customize each solution for our customers, so being able to utilize the three different allocation models has supported our consultative sales process and go-to-market model," notes Amanda Regnerus, Vice President, Marketing and Product Development. "vCloud Director is integral to our growth and the ability to deliver on our business strategy."

Organizationally, vCloud Director evolved US Signal's sales process, taking it from an individual VM sale to a pool of resources the customer can manage and change based upon business needs. This evolution supports more strategic conversations that enable the sales team to differentiate US Signal from other service providers.

Business Results and Benefits

vCloud Director has reduced management overhead and the time for US Signal to deploy new services, while fueling the company's growth by allowing customers to increase resource consumption as needed, in a matter of minutes. The high level of flexibility has also impacted customer satisfaction.

"Our customers are really pleased that vCloud Director gives them the power to control their own destiny," says Regnerus. "Now they can move workloads from different data centers, spin-up resources when they need to, and leverage our Technical Operations Center for rapid resource increases if a new project comes in and they need immediate capacity. That has really improved the customer experience because they can add resources on-the-fly and start consuming, which has helped with our growth as well."

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This growth has included access to larger customers and new opportunities as vCloud Director enables product offerings to be tailored around how customers use and consume services.

"vCloud Director's multi-tenancy capabilities make it easy to control what our customers see and what they can do," says Matt VanderZwaag, Director, Product Development. "That's enabled us to service a diverse set of customers, from small to large enterprises, and even Managed Services Providers."

In fact, one of the most significant impacts has been to US Signal's MSP customers.

"Our MSP customers may be smaller providers who don't have the capital to purchase hardware, set up their own cloud, and manage the equipment lifecycle," Rummelt points out. "These customers are focused on running their businesses and we're able to help by spinning up our own cloud and tailoring it to the MSP space. vCloud Director lets us provide them with a small amount of resources to start, and the agility to increase as their business grows – all with management from a single pane of glass."

At one time, US Signal considered developing its own customer-facing portal on top of vCloud Director. After determining what the portal would deliver, and the investment in time and resources necessary to develop it, the company concluded that vCloud Director provided everything it was looking for, ultimately saving what would have been $100,000+ in custom development.

Looking Ahead

As US Signal continues to grow its customer base and services, the company is exploring the development of a dashboard to let customers see the entire breadth of US Signal services, including network, data backup, workload replication and others. The flexibility of the vCloud API will allow scripted access to cloud resources and a holistic view of the US Signal portfolio of services.

As a member of the vCloud Air Network, US Signal looks forward to leveraging access to additional VMware products as it spins up new data centers and grows its footprint.

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