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Peter Cremer Transforms Data Storage and Business Continuity with VMware Solution

Peter Cremer North America, a global chemicals supplier, revolutionized its data storage and business continuity with services provided by Appica, a VMware partner. Built around VMware products such as VMware Virtual SAN™ software, VMware vSphere® Replication™ technology, and VMware vSphere Data Protection™ software, the solution has enabled Peter Cremer to respond to rapid business growth. The solution also transformed the company's IT infrastructure into a competitive differentiator that will help drive new business going forward.

Peter Cremer North America is a leading supplier of oleochemicals. Established in 1999 as a division of Hamburg, Germany–based Cremer, the company sources, produces, and ships a broad range of chemicals—from vegetable oils to emulsifiers to fatty acids—used in cosmetics, pharmaceuticals, food, and homecare products.

The Challenge

As a leading supplier of chemicals based on plant and animal fats, Peter Cremer always considered itself a manufacturer. But as its business grew, the company was increasingly involved in logistics and data management. "We realized we're really a logistics company that depends on information technology," says Steve Taylor, IT manager for Peter Cremer.

But Peter Cremer's IT infrastructure needed to keep pace. Rapid growth placed data storage at a premium. As one example, customers increasingly required that shipping containers be packed a certain way. "We have to maintain electronic photographs of these 'load-outs,' and the photos have to be tagged and retained and then archived," Taylor explains. Very quickly, the company's storage server reached 98 percent capacity.

Aging servers presented another problem, as system reliability became an issue. "If a server crashed and we had to re-create a single day's worth of business, it could cost us $100,000 in revenue," Taylor says.

Finally, rising customer expectations meant business continuity was a priority. The company had a disaster recovery plan in place, but it needed to upgrade infrastructure to support it. "We provide many of our customers with just-in-time inventory," Taylor notes. "If we go down, they go down. And they can't afford to shut down production."

INDUSTRY
Chemicals

LOCATION
Cincinnati, Ohio

KEY CHALLENGES
- Rapid growth placed data storage at a premium
- An aging IT infrastructure required an upgrade
- Customers demanded failsafe business continuity

SOLUTION
Peter Cremer transformed its data storage and business continuity with the AppBlock service from VMware partner Appica. The solution is built around VMware products such as the VMware Virtual SAN solution, VMware vSphere Replication technology, and VMware vSphere Data Protection software.

BENEFITS
- Storage for current needs, plus the ability to quickly double capacity
- Improved employee productivity through significantly faster performance for mission-critical systems
- Reliable, managed data backups, with fast and complete data recovery
- Assured system uptime, with rapid failover in the event of a disaster
- IT infrastructure that is now a competitive differentiator and helps drive new business

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The Solution

Peter Cremer evaluated offerings that ranged from hardware-only to fully hosted. The solution that best met its unique needs is a service from VMware partner Appica called AppBlock, a pre-engineered IT stack that combines servers, storage, software, security, and expertise. The service is offered in a variety of on-premises and offsite configurations. The goal is to protect mission-critical data while enabling rapid, reliable recovery from a disaster, as well as ongoing operation during an extended outage.

Peter Cremer's IT infrastructure is now built around five VMware solutions that form the basis of the AppBlock service. VMware vSphere software and VMware vCenter Server™ technology provide Peter Cremer with server virtualization and centralized management.

The VMware Virtual SAN solution delivers a policy-driven, software-defined storage tier to streamline storage provisioning and management. The solution brings together storage with the x86 platform, enabling a hyper-converged infrastructure that simplifies storage operations in a virtual environment while providing the ability to scale compute and storage in a flexible, linear manner.

VMware vSphere Replication technology provides storage-independent disaster-recovery protection, enabling replication of the company's virtualized servers from the Virtual SAN storage infrastructure to the Appica cloud. That lets Peter Cremer protect mission-critical applications with aggressive recovery point objectives and recovery time objectives, without the need for identical storage hardware between its site and the Appica cloud.

Finally, VMware vSphere Data Protection software enables simple and efficient data backup and recovery with built-in deduplication as well as replication of the backup data to the Appica cloud.

"This approach gives us the best of all worlds," Taylor says. "We can maintain our mission-critical manufacturing, ERP, and data warehousing onsite, without relying on an external network connection to an offsite data center. We also have much better data management and performance. And we know our systems and data are protected in the event of a catastrophe."

Business Benefits

Peter Cremer now has 12TB of virtual data storage to meet current and future needs. And it can quickly scale up to double that capacity. With VMware Virtual SAN software, the company can scale up with additional capacity on a single server or scale out with additional servers, making expansion more granular and linear than with traditional approaches.

In addition, the company is benefiting from enhanced performance for mission-critical systems such as enterprise resource planning (ERP) software, which improves overall employee productivity. In part, that's a result of the virtualized server environment that replaced aging physical servers. But it also comes from the VMware Virtual SAN solution, which uses inexpensive server-side flash storage to deliver accelerated performance.

"The biggest improvement was to our business intelligence," Taylor notes. "We built a data warehouse for our ERP system, but we didn't have the storage capacity to take full advantage of it. Now we can." Queries and reports that took 15 minutes to generate now run in a matter of seconds. That translates into better, faster business decisions.

Virtualizing nearly all its physical servers also allowed Peter Cremer to retire outmoded equipment and improve server usage. "With the Appica service based on VMware solutions, we have better performance and uptime. And in the event of a disaster, we can get back up and running quickly without any loss of data," Taylor says.

Finally, the company's IT infrastructure has been transformed into a competitive advantage. "We started the project from the perspective of risk management," Taylor points out. "But we soon realized it's actually a competitive differentiator. Our IT infrastructure is now something we can show off to customers," and prospects to help drive sales. "It's comforting for them to know that with our virtualized environment, we're not going to lose data, and we'll always be able to meet their needs."

VMWARE FOOTPRINT
• VMware vSphere
• VMware vCenter Server
• VMware Virtual SAN
• VMware vSphere Replication
• VMware vSphere Data Protection

APPLICATIONS VIRTUALIZED
• Microsoft Dynamics ERP
• Microsoft SharePoint
• Targit business intelligence software
• Quality-control software

PLATFORM
• Dell servers
• Cisco network hardware

PARTNER
Appica

Looking Ahead

Going forward, Peter Cremer plans to expand on the VMware-based capabilities in the AppBlock service by leveraging virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) to extend data access to remote users. Peter Cremer will give frontline employees fast access to their familiar desktop environments and the information they need to do their jobs—regardless of device or location. VMware Virtual SAN is a great fit for the VDI use case because it delivers high performance and CapEx savings.

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