



## RENT-A-CENTER RESPONDS FASTER SECURING THEIR HYBRID CLOUD ENVIRONMENT WITH VMWARE NSX



**INDUSTRY**  
RETAIL

**LOCATION**  
PLANO, TEXAS, UNITED STATES

**KEY CHALLENGES**

- Simplify management of POS systems in local stores
- Secure customer information
- Ensure business continuity in the face of disasters
- Enable employee mobility without compromising security

**SOLUTION**

VMware partner, Mobius Partners, recommended a solution consisting of vSphere virtualization software, vRealize Suite cloud management, VMware NSX network virtualization, and vCloud Air. This software-defined infrastructure allows compute, network, storage and security resources to be configured dynamically to meet Rent-A-Center's unique needs.

**BUSINESS BENEFITS**

- Reduced system deployment time to minutes, slashing time to market for new features
- Enhanced security and compliance with regulations including PCI DSS
- Protected against disasters by replicating information to the cloud
- Supported mobile workforce with secure access to applications

To reduce the cost of managing systems at its more than 3,000 locations, Rent-A-Center centralized its point-of-sale application using VMware vSphere, vSphere vRealize Suite and VMware NSX. Working with VMware partner Mobius Partners, the company accomplished the conversion in just 60 days. Developers can now self-provision resources in just minutes, shortening time to market for new features. In addition, Rent-A-Center gained IT scalability and now delivers more secure IT services to meet the demands of its growing business.

Rent-a-Center, a rent-to-own company with \$3B in revenue and > 50% market share was experiencing explosive growth. The company operates 3,000 stores across the U.S., Canada, Mexico and Puerto Rico offering a variety of consumer goods including electronics, furniture and other durable goods, as well as financing services which represent a significant source of revenue for the company. Customers including realtors, home owners, renters, newlyweds, etc., like the immediate access to consumer goods as well as the convenience of short-term financing right at the rental office.

**The Challenge**

Company growth has required rapid infrastructure expansion and has resulted in increased IT challenges in serving business needs. "We are experiencing tremendous growth in the sheer volume of data," says Michael Conroy, Sr. Director, TechOps at Rent-A-Center. "Our infrastructure has tripled in size in the last 18 months."

The company was using a decentralized architecture with Rent-A-Center's homegrown point-of-sale (POS) application running on local servers in individual stores but this approach proved to be operationally difficult to scale, manage and maintain, hampering flexibility and consuming IT resources that could otherwise be applied to more strategic initiatives.

Another serious challenge was maintaining consistent security and compliance across stores. "We have stringent security and compliance requirements, especially for the Payment Card Industry Data Security Standard (PCI DSS)," says Martin Vogt, senior systems manager at Rent-A-Center. "Securing our customers' credit card and other personal information is critical." That same level of security needs to be maintained even on mobile devices, including smart devices used by Rent-A-Center's increasingly mobile workforce for accessing business applications.

“With vRealize Automation and VMware NSX, provisioning is push-button. We can deliver an entire environment to a developer in a day, something that used to take weeks.”

MICHAEL CONROY  
SR. DIRECTOR, TECHOPS  
RENT-A-CENTER

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Given the fact that Rent-A-Center maintained sensitive customer information and intellectual property, any data loss caused by natural or human disaster could be costly. Rent-A-Center needed a more robust disaster recovery solution that would protect its valuable assets and scale as needed to accommodate growth.

### The Solution

In order to enable IT to scale to the needs of the business in an efficient, secure and scalable manner without increased complexity, Rent-A-Center decided to adopt a Software Defined Data Center (SDDC) approach. With the help of Mobius Partners, a VMware partner, they decided to shift to a centralized model using virtual machines to host the POS system for all of its locations and deploy a SDDC architecture consisting of VMware vSphere® Enterprise Plus Edition™ virtualization software, VMware vRealize™ Suite Enterprise cloud management software and a VMware NSX™ network virtualization platform. “During the evaluation process, we compared vRealize Suite Enterprise and VMware NSX to Cisco, says Vogt. “VMware won hands down based on supportability and breadth of feature set.”

Working closely with Mobius and VMware, Rent-A-Center converted all 3,000 stores to the new POS system in just 60 days. “The VMware automation tools and the support of Mobius Partners allowed us to achieve our time and budget objectives for the conversion,” says Vogt. The virtual machines supporting the POS system are powered by vSphere Enterprise Plus.

In the past, provisioning resources for developers required standing up the server and configuring firewalls and other security components manually. “With vRealize Automation and VMware NSX, provisioning is push-button,” says Conroy. “We can deliver an entire environment to a developer in a day, something that used to take weeks.”

Rent-A-Center also uses VMware vCloud® Air™ to provide a replication site for disaster recovery, as well as a rapid deployment environment. “If our data center resources are stretched thin, we can quickly deploy additional virtual servers to vCloud Air and make them immediately available,” says Conroy. “I never worry about running out of compute resources.”

To allow the use of smartphones and tablets, Rent-A-Center turned to AirWatch® by VMware. “AirWatch gives us the ability to push our internal applications out to mobile devices and maintain the level of security we require.”

### Business Results & Benefits

**Reduced IT time for POS system deployment** – The automation capabilities of VMware vRealize Suite Enterprise and VMware NSX dramatically sped up time for provisioning networking and security services and ultimately the process of converting stores to the new POS system, allowing the IT team to deploy a hundred stores a day with just three or four people. Ongoing updates to the POS software can be quickly and consistently deployed, reducing the IT time and cost associated with server management.

**Better security and compliance** – The VMware NSX network virtualization platform enables security services to be provisioned within minutes and ensures that firewall rules and other security parameters are correctly configured and updated in all stores. As a result, Rent-A-Center’s security has been fundamentally enhanced and remains strong even as the company grows.

#### VMWARE FOOTPRINT

- VMware vRealize Suite Enterprise
- VMware vSphere Enterprise Plus
- VMware NSX
- VMware vCloud Air Dedicated Cloud
- AirWatch by VMware

SDDC with NSX reduces the attack surface by containing threats at the workload level and preventing them from propagating from server-to-server. This limits scope and makes it much easier to comply with PCI DSS and other regulations and avoids costly fines from regulatory bodies as well as loss of brand value.

**Faster development and shorter time to market** – NSX enables networking and security services to be provisioned in a lockstep with virtual machines enabling developers to get access to the resources they need in a fraction of the time it used to take, which results in shortened development times and rapid rollout of new features. When data center resources are stretched thin, Rent-A-Center can quickly deploy development resources in their hybrid cloud using vCloud Air and keep developers on track for their release deadlines.

**Improved disaster recovery** – Rent-A-Center protects sensitive customer information and company intellectual property by replicating data to the hybrid cloud powered by vCloud Air. The company complements its existing DR solution with NSX. NSX replicates the entire network and security environment allowing the recovery time objective to be dramatically reduced. In the event of a natural or human-created disaster disrupting the main data center, Rent-A-Center can stand up resources in the hybrid cloud and repopulate the business information within hours.

**Provided secure remote access to applications** – Using AirWatch, Rent-A-Center's IT team can push out applications to mobile devices and provide a high level of security. This capability allows the company to expand the use of smartphones and tablets without compromising security or compliance. Now that Rent-A-Center representatives have mobile access to email and other applications, they can transact business from anywhere at virtually any time, which increases sales and is much more convenient for customers. Today, Rent-A-Center supports more than 1,000 mobile users—a figure that is sure to keep rising.

#### Looking Ahead

Where will Rent-A-Center be in five years? Vogt foresees IT continuity despite big changes. "Our data center infrastructure will be continually changing with the evolution of the hardware components and data center technology," he says. "That's why it's crucial to abstract the computing, storage, security and network functionality in software—exactly what VMware does. Our VMware-powered hybrid cloud gives us the flexibility to take some risks in the business because we can move rapidly when we need to."

