BUSINESS CONTINUITY AND SOLID NETWORK SECURITY DRIVE GROWTH AT HELVETIA

helvetia

Your Swiss Insurer.

CUSTOMER
HELVETIA GROUP

WEB SITE
WWW.HELVETIA.COM

INDUSTRY
INSURANCE

LOCATION
BASEL, SWITZERLAND

KEY CHALLENGES

- Enable the business to be faster to market with new, digital services
- Improve IT efficiency with simplified management and greater automation
- Consolidate four data centers into two

SOLUTION
The solution is based on VMware NSX® Data Center which helps create a SDDC for Helvetia, delivering networking and security entirely in software.

IMPACT

- Simplified control of complex network
- Less resource spent on maintenance of hardware, more on developing new services
- High availability between two clusters ensures business continuity

Helvetia is a Swiss insurance provider. By engaging with VMware, the business has strengthened its network security and addressed business continuity concerns. Today, Helvetia is more automated, more efficient and better able to focus on new business opportunities.

Over 160 years, Helvetia Insurance has grown into a successful, international insurance group. With headquarters in St. Gallen and Basel, it is Switzerland's leading all-lines insurer. Helvetia's success is founded on the diversification between life and non-life business, and as well as a strong home market, it has profitable market positions in other European countries, with above-average growth in Germany, Austria, Italy and Spain.

In the Specialty Markets segment, Helvetia offers bespoke specialty lines cover and reinsurance solutions in selected niches worldwide. It provides its five million plus customer-base with professional advice on all insurance matters, as well as contacts for various sectors under a single roof. More than 7,500 employees work daily to arrive at simple solutions.

Helvetia's brand promise, "simple. clear. helvetia" applies to customers, shareholders and employees alike. The insurance sector is perceived as complicated. Helvetia wants to make the world of insurance simple to access and easier to understand.

Challenge

Helvetia is one of Switzerland's largest insurance providers. It is also an increasingly international business. It already has operations across Europe and plans for further growth.

Staying still is not an option. Increased competition from new entrants, digital services, and data revolution have created a compelling case for digital transformation in the insurance sector.

If traditional insurers expect to remain competitive, they must become more agile, more efficient, more customer-centric, and more sophisticated in the way they use data and analytics. These qualities are reflected in Helvetia's '20.20' growth strategy. The business wants digital transformation to make customer services faster, easier and more personal.

Achieving high customer satisfaction and trust is one of Helvetia's primary goals. The company is committed to delivering high-quality, secure services for customers and its employees. Having a secure IT environment is a critical part of Helvetia's operations.

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"Our digital transformation journey with VMware means we are benefiting from the computing power and security and agility, to handle a changing market."

ANDREAS HAGIN
LEAD ENGINEER, IT INFRASTRUCTURE
HELVETIA

VMWARE FOOTPRINT

• VMware NSX® Datacenter

• VMware vCloud Suite®

• VMware vSphere® Hypervisor 6.0 and 6.5

• VMware vRealize® Network Insight™

PARTNER

point solutions
IT auf den Punkt gebracht.

"The insurance business is based on trust," says Andreas Hagin, Lead Engineer, IT Infrastructure, Helvetia. "Focusing on customers is firmly anchored in our values and we set very high standards for ourselves and our IT security."

For Helvetia IT, one challenge is being able to handle a rapidly growing volume of work with the same number of employees. That means minimizing the number of manual tasks required of team members, reducing the need to retrain and redeploy teams, and finding new ways to deliver services as efficiently as possible.

Digesting the 2014 acquisition of rivals Nationale Suisse provided an ideal opportunity for the company to rethink its IT approach. The acquisition required the consolidation of four data centers into two. "We didn't have enough space to consolidate into two, so we started to look for new premises in Switzerland," says Hagin. "We started with a blank sheet of paper."

Action

Helvetia's virtualization journey began with VMware in 2003. Hagin saw the consolidation project as the right time to start micro-segmentation of its data centers:

"Security is becoming more and more important. Micro-segmentation means we have better control of our servers. This is key in the insurance market."

The VMware solution, part of the Enterprise Level Agreement, is based on VMware NSX® Data Center. This helps create a Software-Defined Data Center (SDDC) for Helvetia, delivering networking and security entirely in software, abstracted from the underlying physical infrastructure, as well as increased functionality.

In addition, VMware vCloud Suite® is an enterprise-ready hybrid cloud software that brings together the industry-leading VMware vSphere® Hypervisor 6.0 and 6.5, VMware vRealize® Suite cloud management platform and VMware vRealize® Network Insight™. vRealize Suite provides developer-friendly infrastructure (supporting VMs and containers) and a common approach to hybrid and multicloud and works together with NSX to dramatically reduce the delivery time of VMs.

VMware vSphere is a purpose-built bare-metal hypervisor that installs directly onto a physical server. With direct access and control of underlying resources, vSphere is more efficient than hosted architectures and can effectively partition hardware to increase consolidation ratios and reduce costs.

"We did a Proof of Concept, and the most relevant feature of VMware NSX Data Center was speed," says Hagin. "It was faster and simpler to deploy than all the alternatives. Previous virtualization projects had been step-by-step, this allowed us to move faster than we'd planned."

Impact

Today, Helvetia has two active-active data centers in the Zurich area (a part of the country with less risk of earthquakes than Helvetia's home city of Basel). The entire project was completed in 18 months.

This strengthens business continuity, delivers a more efficient infrastructure, reduces downtime, and means Helvetia can be faster to market with new services. Also, it will be easier to integrate new acquisitions or scale up infrastructure in support of growth areas of the business.

vmware®

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"We have an environment that is scalable, that can be adjusted very quickly, and where we can separate information from different business units," says Hagin. "We have centralized control as the business expands internationally, with the access to cloud where needed."

None of this is visible to Helvetia customers, but the company's new speed to market might be. "The market is changing and time to market is critical. We have to move fast to market in a multichannel world, so that could mean via Facebook, or chat bots, or using AI to create a more personal risk profile. We now have the computing power, and agility, to handle all of this."

The IT function is also more efficient; Hagin says the team is maintaining more services with the same headcount. He is also able to lean on excellent VMware support. "With VMware Professional Services, we have support if there are any issues. We have a solution or a workaround in place very quickly," he says.

"From my perspective, VMware vRNI is a must-have, giving us visibility of the complete virtualized infrastructure."

Looking Ahead

From a cost perspective, the Enterprise Level Agreement has allowed Helvetia to maintain a flat budget. Hagin says the business is committed to virtualization, and that deal only strengthens the relationship with VMware:

"We're now looking at VDI, that is the natural next step, and we want to explore more networking functionality in NSX. We're happy with the direction we're heading."