



Maintenance effort reduced by 90%



IT resources freed to support business growth



New services implemented faster



Infrastructure costs moved from CAPEX to OPEX

STUDENT AGENCY gives its IT team free rein while improving service availability

STUDENT AGENCY Holding is one of the largest Czech transport companies and offers flight tickets and trips, as well as language study and work abroad programs. Its old IT infrastructure lacked flexibility and had highly demanding management and maintenance systems. It was replaced with modern hyperconverged infrastructure based on VMware vSAN™, and a Dell solution was provided in the form of Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS). This consolidated virtualized environment has significantly reduced overall management complexity and allowed for a more flexible implementation of new technologies that support STUDENT AGENCY's business.

The Czech leader in travel and transport

STUDENT AGENCY Group has been active in the market since 1993. The company focuses on a broad portfolio of travel and transport services. Its RegioJet brand is a leading bus and railway operator in the Czech Republic and Slovakia. It is also a major vendor of flight tickets and holiday trips, as well as the largest provider of language study and work abroad programs. Its philosophy of providing the best services at a great price has made it successful in a highly competitive market. That is why reliable IT infrastructure with high availability is essential for the company.

Management and maintenance tasks overwhelmed the IT team

The legacy IT infrastructure was based on two virtualization environments and multiple external disk arrays. Not only were the components becoming increasingly outdated, but

STUDENT AGENCY

STUDENT AGENCY is a leading bus and railway operator in the Czech Republic and Slovakia, a major vendor of flight tickets and holiday trips, and is the largest agency offering language study and work abroad. www.studentagency.cz

INDUSTRY

Travel-Leisure

HEADQUARTERS

Brno, Czech Republic

ABOUT GAPP SYSTEM

GAPP System is a highly skilled and experienced advanced technology solutions provider with proven capabilities in designing, deploying and supporting complex legacy IT and cloud environments. www.gapp.cz

VMWARE FOOTPRINT

VMware vSphere®
VMware vSAN™



the solution itself was also unwieldy and did not allow for effective scaling of either capacity or performance. That is why in 2018 STUDENT AGENCY decided to consolidate the entire system.

“IT infrastructure uptime was critical to the success of our digital business systems. But the time and effort required to keep older infrastructure systems working meant our IT team didn’t have time to help develop and deliver new services to our customers. And if our infrastructure failed to work properly, there would be a great risk of slowed response to our customers, potentially resulting in their dissatisfaction and a switch to other carriers and vendors,” explains Jakub Skopal, ICT Infrastructure Manager, STUDENT AGENCY Group.

GAPP System, partnering with data center consolidation and modernization specialists VMware and Dell, helped STUDENT AGENCY define the key requirements and expectations for a new solution. The objectives included not only consolidation and modernization of the existing infrastructure, but also a significant increase in performance and flexibility, management and maintenance simplification, and an improvement in the availability of services. The decision was also made to shift infrastructure costs from CAPEX to OPEX, thus freeing up valuable resources.

Infrastructure as a Service, even for critical systems

GAPP System’s solution consists of hyperconverged infrastructure using the servers’ local physical storage resources instead of external disk arrays. Software-defined storage technology based on VMware vSAN running on Dell PowerEdge servers with VxRail Manager software provides for the shared disk space and its security. This state-of-the-art network security solution meets all consolidation requirements and significantly simplifies maintenance while ensuring high performance and scalability. The company currently operates hundreds of virtual servers on seven Dell EMC VxRail nodes boasting over 100 TB of net capacity

“We selected VMware because of our consistently good experience with other VMware solutions. The choice of VMware vSAN was a step towards infrastructure modernization and management simplification. It gave us

additional flexibility to increase performance,” says Jakub Skopal, ICT Infrastructure Manager, STUDENT AGENCY Group.

The solution is delivered IaaS, i.e., as a service with fixed monthly subscription payments. This allows spreading the IT infrastructure financing over a longer period of time without high upfront investment costs. It allows for flexible future expansion into new services and providers, and incorporates end-to-end support with pro-active monitoring of the entire infrastructure. Though STUDENT AGENCY has migrated to a private cloud system and benefits from all the advantages of cloud-delivered services, the infrastructure itself remains in its own data center. “Applications are fully virtualized, and business-critical networks like reservation systems and call centers are supported, including both back-end systems and front-end systems for customer interaction,” adds Jakub Skopal.

Time and cost efficiency

In the first year since the launch of the new solution, STUDENT AGENCY has reaped the benefit of its many advantages over the original infrastructure. “We are happy with the new system, it has proven its worth. Its increased flexibility provides us with better services,” says Jakub Skopal, ICT Infrastructure Manager, STUDENT AGENCY Group. In addition to the many expected benefits, such as consolidation, modernization, the significant simplification of the existing infrastructure, and reduction of management and maintenance resource intensity, the customer also appreciates the improvement in service availability. This is associated with the significant increase in performance to hundreds of thousands of IOPS with extremely low latency and flexible scaling options.

“A significant simplification of management has allowed us to focus on other projects. We now spend significantly less time on maintenance. We have freed our IT resources to focus on supporting business growth and the quality of customer services.”

JAKUB SKOPAL
ICT INFRASTRUCTURE MANAGER, STUDENT AGENCY

The new consolidated virtualized environment has significantly reduced overall management complexity and allowed for more flexible implementation of new technologies to support STUDENT AGENCY’s business. “One month we may decide to

launch a new international train line, and all aspects of the application have to be ready by the next month. The significant simplification of system management has allowed us to focus on other projects; for example the development of a virtual desktop or the modernization of our application platform for container technologies. We are spending significantly less time on maintenance. We have freed our IT resources to focus on supporting business growth and the quality of services for our customers,” explains Jakub Skopal. The reduction of labor costs dedicated to infrastructure maintenance combined with the reclassification other infrastructure-related costs from CAPEX to OPEX have allowed the company to implement the project for about a fifth of the cost, and that in annual payments for the service, instead of a large one-time investment at the beginning.



“vSphere and vSAN form the foundation of the HCI solution. These technologies provide great flexibility and scalability allowing us to promptly respond to our business needs and requirements. At the same time, they help keep the total infrastructure maintenance costs low. We have therefore been able to accelerate the time in which we are able to introduce new services,” says Jakub Skopal. “A significant performance boost helps us satisfy peak demand effortlessly and thus provide a better experience to our customers when they order our services.”

Future development

STUDENT AGENCY plans to continue the evolution of its data center modernization strategy and pursue further automation. It has virtualized compute and storage and is considering network virtualization. It has been testing VMware Horizon to virtualize employee endpoints. STUDENT AGENCY sees the advantage of flexible terminal stations that can be provided to the hundreds of peak season temporary workers that they hire, as well as the benefit of being able to move employees to fully fledged home offices. The company has also been giving the deployment of VMware Tanzu serious consideration as a containerization platform for running modern applications.



Modern **#HCI** based on **#VMware** **#vSAN** and **@DellTechCzech** has significantly reduced overall management complexity and allowed for more flexible implementation of new technologies to support STUDENT AGENCY’s business **#GappSystem** **#StudentAgency**.
