



Established in 1889, Carhartt is a global premium workwear brand with a rich heritage of developing rugged products for workers on and off the job. The company has operations in the U.S., Mexico and Europe.

Industry

Apparel

Key benefits

- Established reliable cloud infrastructure for critical workloads
- Enables easy-to-manage, more secure digital workspaces
- Leverages existing VMware investment
- Frees IT team to support strategic business initiatives

About Microsoft

Microsoft enables digital transformation for the era of an intelligent cloud and an intelligent edge. Its mission is to empower every person and every organization on the planet to achieve more.

VMware footprint

- Azure VMware Solution, including VMware vSphere®, VMware NSX-T™, VMware vSAN™, and VMware HCX®
- VMware Horizon® Universal Subscription

Carhartt Gears Up for Growth with Azure VMware Solution

Since sewing its first bib overalls for railroad workers in 1889, Carhartt has built a reputation as an American apparel icon. The privately owned company operates manufacturing, distribution and wholesale organizations, along with retail stores, and employs more than 5,300 associates worldwide.

In recent years, Carhartt's continued growth strained its aging IT infrastructure. Experiencing several outages every year, the company's CIO tasked the IT team with evaluating cloud-based alternatives. Carhartt started with a needed upgrade to its SAP environment, which catalyzed a migration to Microsoft Azure. With that initial success, and upon further evaluation of the costs and benefits of cloud compared to a hardware refresh for its existing hyperconverged infrastructure, Carhartt decided to move the majority of its environment to Azure.

"We're big fans of VMware, using it in our on-premises environment for years. We also already have a significant relationship with Microsoft. When we heard about Azure having its own VMware solution, we were excited," says Haidar Abouzenni, systems engineer, Carhartt.

"We looked at alternatives but preferred Microsoft because of our other Azure investments. We considered several factors and concluded that Azure VMware Solution offered us the most benefits, including cost savings and ease of management," he says.

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Partnering for accelerated cloud migration

KochaSoft, a certified Microsoft Gold partner with a specialty certification for SAP on Azure, first worked with Carhartt on its migration to SAP S/4HANA Cloud on Azure. Then, it turned to helping Carhartt deploy Azure VMware Solution. With Azure VMware Solution, Carhartt leverages its existing VMware investments, skills and tools while gaining speed and scale with modern, managed Azure infrastructure. The solution includes VMware vSphere, VMware vSAN, VMware NSX-T, as well as VMware HCX to streamline application migration, workload rebalancing, and business continuity across Carhartt's primary Michigan-based data centers and cloud environments.

KochaSoft helped move approximately 400 Carhartt virtual machines to Azure VMware Solution. This included workloads for database, security, electronic data interchange, and facilities systems along with applications for color and processing used by its technical apparel design teams.

"We functioned pretty much as a seamless team between KochaSoft and Carhartt. That was a driving force for the success of the project," says Randy Kirkpatrick, vice president for cloud delivery, KochaSoft.

"I think our biggest challenge was making sure we had connectivity that would handle the bandwidth requirements, and our network team came through on that," says Abouzenni. "KochaSoft had a breadth of knowledge that was very helpful for completing our migration on an accelerated schedule."

Now, KochaSoft manages and monitors Carhartt's Azure VMware Solution environment in addition to its overall Azure cloud infrastructure. The Azure VMware Solution workloads primarily reside in the Azure East Data Center Region in Virginia, with disaster recovery set up in the Azure West Data Center Region in California.

Highly secure and flexible digital workspaces

Next, Carhartt is turning its attention to virtual desktop infrastructure. Carhartt has been running VMware Horizon on-premises for nearly seven years. The approximately 350 virtual desktops are used mainly by outside contractors. The IT team manages six or seven different virtual desktop image pools, including some specific to needs for members of the developer, SAP and website support, and monitoring teams. With the move to Azure, Carhartt also switched its Horizon perpetual licenses to Horizon Universal Subscription, enabling the company to continue to leverage its on-premises Horizon environment while expanding to Horizon Cloud Service™ on Microsoft Azure.

"When Horizon Cloud Service on Microsoft Azure became available, it seemed like a natural progression for us. We wanted to keep the user experience and the management close to what we've enjoyed, making it an ideal solution," Abouzenni says.

The solution makes good sense for Carhartt from a security perspective. "We have a major directive from our security team to make sure that we mitigate risks of malicious activity. One way to do that is by using virtual desktops because we can control the types of access those virtual desktop users receive," says Abouzenni.

Another reason Abouzenni is excited to move to Horizon Cloud Service on Microsoft Azure is that it will eliminate the current need to use VPN with its virtual desktops, as directed by Carhartt's security team. "With Horizon Cloud Service on Microsoft Azure, we can free up some VPN licenses and still meet our corporate security policies. Also, eliminating the VPN step streamlines and improves the user experience. Finally, it expands the range of use cases for us across the business, which will further simplify our overall IT management," he says.



For example, Carhartt already anticipates expanding its Horizon Cloud Service on Microsoft Azure environment to include its customer service call center staff, who are not currently using virtual desktops.

Among those already using virtual desktops at Carhartt are internal developers. “Some of our systems are a bit demanding and by using a Horizon virtual desktop, they’re not tying up their laptops. They can do other work while things are happening in the background. It gives them a lot of flexibility and helps them be more productive. They really like that,” Abouzenni says.

Managed cloud infrastructure as reliable as its apparel

Since migrating to Azure VMware Solution and Azure overall, Carhartt has enjoyed the lack of hardware issues. “I don’t have the headaches of a drive going bad or trying to coordinate my schedule with a hardware vendor to get them in-person access to the cage at the data center. I don’t have to worry about rushing over at two in the morning to replace memory modules,” says Abouzenni.

Routine updates are completed seamlessly in the cloud environment. “We are able to push updates a lot faster than compared to the on-premises infrastructure. It’s been a big success, particularly with mitigating downtime risk,” says Sriram Srinivasan, solution architect, KochaSoft.

“We’ve given up a little bit of control over the storage environments and the servers themselves, but we have enough control for our applications, and our users are happy with what we provide them. It’s a favorable trade-off,” says Abouzenni. “KochaSoft does a great job managing our environments.”

Carhartt appreciates the stability of its new cloud infrastructure. “Since we’ve been with Azure VMware Solution, we’ve had zero downtime. We love the reliability. Plus, I’ve got a little bit of time back. Those are great benefits,” says Abouzenni.

As he spends less time managing infrastructure, Abouzenni looks forward to helping with applications that benefit Carhartt’s individual departments. “I’m glad to have fewer concerns about the ‘plumbing’ and be able spend more time making processes more efficient and contributing to the company’s strategic and very rapid growth,” he says.