



Harel Insurance promotes culture of innovation



CUSTOMER

Harel Insurance

WEB SITE

www.harel-group.com

INDUSTRY

Insurance

LOCATION

Tel Aviv, Israel

KEY CHALLENGES

- Establish effective monitoring of complex infrastructure
- Be faster to market with new customer services, and quicker to find and resolve issues
- Ensure as-a-service functionality to enable business to scale quickly

SOLUTION

- Deployed NSX Data Center, vRealize Automation, and vRealize Network Insight to deliver micro-segmentation

Harel Insurance & Finance is the biggest player in Israel's insurance market. By adopting VMware solutions – from server virtualization to network management – the group has created an efficient, agile IT environment that supports a dynamic business. This platform has transformed the culture within the business, creating a more dynamic, engaged outlook. It ensures Harel is faster to market with new services, and better able to support innovation around its digital transformation agenda.

Harel Insurance Investments & Financial Services Ltd, is Israel's largest insurance and finance group, with a 20% share of the general market (rising to 45% in health insurance). It provides comprehensive financial and insurance solutions and is a household name in Israel. The business is headquartered near Tel Aviv, and has 5,000 employees.

Challenge

The market for insurance services in Israel is both dynamic and established. The market continues to grow, but is dominated by just five companies.

The challenge for the established players is to develop new routes to market which will enhance the customer experience, while strengthening (or at least protecting) existing channels. The ideal is an omni-channel strategy that matches different expectations from customers at different stages. For the Big 5, the fear is that an entirely new player may arrive with a unique proposition.

Harel Insurance Investments & Financial Services is the market leader. Its pressures are slightly different.

"When you're #1 the biggest challenge is remaining there," says Amir Levy, Senior Vice President for Infrastructure, Technology and Cyber Security, Harel Insurance. The temptation may be to protect what you have, rather than create something new.

This is not an option for Harel, says Levy. Instead, Harel's focus is on new markets, efficiency, and time to market. "Doing things better and quicker than our competitors," in Levy's words.

Digital transformation underpins this. In 2014 Harel formed a plan.

Harel wants to create an efficient, flexible IT infrastructure. Where possible, it wants to automate every human process, shifting the focus from maintenance to new service development.

“VMware is central to the simplified management of an efficient IT infrastructure. We see VMware as one of the foundations of the services we need to provide.”

AMIR LEVY
SVP INFRASTRUCTURE,
TECHNOLOGY AND CYBER SECURITY
HAREL INSURANCE

IMPACT

- Less resources spent on maintenance of hardware, more on developing new services
- Created a “one-click to create” environment, with extensive automation of manual processes and servers spun up in hours, not days
- Change of culture, more engaged staff, a better place to work
- Keeps business at forefront of the market, enabling it to be first to market with new web and mobile applications
- NSX Data Center and vRealize Network Insight ensures enhanced security for Harel
- By deploying NSX Data Center and vRealize Network Insight Harel saves time by accelerating micro-segmentation deployment

VMWARE FOOTPRINT

- VMware NSX® Data Center
- VMware vRealize® Network Insight™
- VMware vRealize® Automation™

It wants to remove barriers to storage, performance, and network, allowing developers to be faster to market with new services. Levy says he wants IT to be the ‘silent leader’ of change throughout the business, proactively steering future strategy.

“Changing our culture is perhaps the biggest challenge,” he says. “We need more than 10 years ago. Today, 95% of its servers are virtual.

The engagement has since grown. By deploying VMware NSX® Data Center, and VMware vRealize® Network Insight™ Harel is now better able to leverage network virtualization to segment its network. The former delivers networking and security entirely in software, abstracted from the underlying physical infrastructure; the latter saves time by accelerating micro-segmentation deployment, minimizes business risk during application migration and enables Harel to confidently manage and scale its NSX Data Center deployment. NSX Data Center, vRealize Automation, and vRealize Network Insight combined, meant Harel was up and running in days.

VMware is central to the simplified management of an efficient IT infrastructure, says Levy:

“VMware brought an amazing revolution when they started the whole idea of virtualization. It’s really interesting to see how they’ve evolved. We see VMware as one of the foundations of the services that we need to provide.”

Harel’s IT infrastructure, built on VMware micro-segmentation, is now, “massive, robust, secure and elastic,” says Niv Raz, Technology Leader, Harel Insurance.

“Micro-segmentation allows us to containerize applications, isolating them from the rest of the network. We looked at several products, but VMware NSX Data Center was the one that provided a complete ecosystem. It is the piece of the puzzle that connects to our core infrastructure. We’re up and running in days because every feature is natively integrated.”

Impact

As the relationship with VMware deepens, Harel has become more secure, more efficient and more agile. There is greater automation, and a clearer audit trail of what piece of infrastructure is responsible for what service. Ultimately Harel is faster to market with new insurance services, and dynamic in the way it engages customers.

For instance, Harel now enables customers to buy short term car insurance via a link in a WhatsApp chat, one of the first times an insurance provider has used the new WhatsApp Business Application Program Interface (API). It is not a massive revenue generator but indicates Harel’s willingness to explore new channels to reach new customer segments. It also sets the right tone: Harel will pursue innovation.

“The outcomes from innovation can be fantastic,” says Levy. “We don’t see new ventures not succeeding as failure. Perhaps it’s not the outcome we wanted, but we’ll benefit from the knowledge and experience.”

Niv Raz says speed is essential to this fail-fast approach. “Years ago, the market would have been happy with new releases every six months, that’s not the case today. Our developers now have infrastructure-as-code. If they need a new

“Thanks to VMware, our developers now have infrastructure-as-code. If they need a new server they have it in minutes not days.”

NIV RAZ
TECHNOLOGY LEADER
HAREL INSURANCE

server, they have it in minutes not days. We want our developers to develop, not waste their time on tasks they don't need to take on.”

The aim, he says, is for a continuous drip of new services, updates and improvements. “The power outlet in the wall is IT.”

The use of VMware Professional Services and a Technical Account Manager (TAM) further strengthens Harel's hand, Raz says. “We see the TAM as a trusted advisor, a single point of contact for everything we need from VMware. We have ideas around innovation, but there is value in discussing them with a neutral expert.”

Looking Ahead

For Raz, the future will be Platform-as-a-Service, with even less human touch: “Our focus will be on managing the platform, not the infrastructure.”

Amir Levy says the future is positive: “Maybe it's a by-product of living in the technology world, but we see things moving so much more quickly. In the past revolutions were scarce, today we see new things coming every day.

“VMware is now part of our ecosystem. We definitely see a place for them in our future plans.”