Secure-24

Secure-24 Lowers Costs, Speeds Deployment, and Gains Flexibility by Virtualizing SAP HANA with VMware vSphere Solution

As a certified SAP partner, managed cloud services provider Secure-24 has hosted systems using the SAP HANA in-memory database since it was released in 2010. Yet unlike the majority of the applications Secure-24 hosts, SAP HANA was only available as a dedicated physical appliance—until recently, when SAP opened the door to virtualizing SAP HANA via the VMware vSphere® platform. Today, Secure-24 offers a more flexible SAP HANA service at a significantly reduced cost utilizing vSphere virtualization.

Founded in 2001 in Southfield, Michigan, Secure-24 provides managed hosting and private cloud services to medium and large global enterprises. With a focus on application hosting, Secure-24 relies on more than 500 employees and a network of Tier IV and Tier IV+ data centers to deliver highly secure and highly available services that scale to meet clients' evolving business and budget requirements.

The Challenge

Although Secure-24 delivers a variety of services, the company's primary focus is on providing managed hosting for the applications that are critical to the enterprise. Secure-24 leverages partnerships with key industry players to obtain the certifications and in-depth technical knowledge required to provide cloud-based management of applications, including SAP, Oracle, PeopleSoft, JD Edwards, Hyperion, and more.

Today, Secure-24 manages upward of 10,000 systems, the vast majority of which are virtualized. Until recently, however, SAP HANA, one of the most important applications in Secure-24's cloud, was available only as a physical appliance. This meant that each customer that required SAP HANA's accelerated database processing and advanced analytics had to have its own physical appliance in Secure-24's infrastructure, making the service unaffordable to some.

When SAP began offering its Tailored Data Center Integration program, which made it possible for hosts to use their own certified storage and infrastructure with the system rather than relying on the components within the HANA appliance, Secure-24 welcomed the opportunity to participate.

"We knew that we could become much more agile as a business and pass on enormous savings and flexibility to our customers by moving away from a cost model in which we had to make dedicated investments per customer in large SAP HANA appliances and move instead to one in which we could spread memory over a cluster and scale up over time," says Len Landale, vice president of ERP and application hosting for Secure-24.

The Solution

Secure-24 became one of the first managed cloud providers to receive the SAP certification for virtualizing SAP HANA production workloads. The fact that SAP had selected the

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INDUSTRY
Technology

LOCATION
Southfield, Michigan

KEY CHALLENGES
- Make SAP HANA accessible to more clients.
- Provide customers with improved flexibility and speed.
- Leverage existing management and disaster recovery tools for SAP HANA services.

SOLUTION
Secure-24 used the VMware vSphere platform to virtualize SAP HANA in its managed cloud to provide a more flexible solution at a lower cost to its customers.

BUSINESS BENEFITS
- Lowered costs associated with offering SAP HANA
- Increased flexibility to provide rightsized virtualized SAP HANA environment
- Reduced SAP HANA deployment time from weeks to days

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VMWARE FOOTPRINT
• VMware vSphere 5.5

APPLICATIONS VIRTUALIZED
• SAP HANA

vSphere solution as the only platform for SAP HANA virtualization made things easy for Landale and team because they had already virtualized the better part of Secure-24's existing environment using VMware products.

According to Landale, the process was remarkably painless. "From a business perspective, we were already well-positioned with SAP HANA knowledge," he says. "And because we had the application and infrastructure-level knowledge around VMware, it was easy to apply to virtualizing SAP HANA." Secure-24 didn't require any additional servers, personnel, or technology to make the change. "We simply leveraged our own management tools as well as those built into vSphere, just as we would have done to deploy another infrastructure-type cluster," Landale explains.

Today, Secure-24's VMware-virtualized SAP HANA environment is growing rapidly, with many customers opting to host on the virtualized platform. Says Landale, "The vast majority of our new SAP HANA customers are running the in-memory platform in the virtualized environment. In fact, unless customers require a huge memory footprint, we automatically put them in the vSphere-enabled environment for SAP HANA, so you can see where we're headed as a business."

Business Benefits

By virtualizing SAP HANA with the vSphere solution, Secure-24 has lowered the barrier to entry for its SAP HANA hosting and opened the service to new potential customers. "There's a clear and growing desire in the marketplace to be able to take advantage of the power of SAP HANA without a huge capital outlay," says Landale. "VMware allows us to fulfill that desire by offering a virtualized solution that allows them to buy it on an operating-expense basis."

What's more, the easy transition process allowed Secure-24 to move quickly and immediately pass the cost savings on to customers to gain a clear competitive advantage. And because SAP HANA is now unified with the rest of Secure-24's virtualized data center, it simplifies operations management and improves resource utilization.

By virtualizing SAP HANA with the vSphere solution, Secure-24 has also drastically reduced the time it takes to make new systems and services available to customers. "Thanks to the automation provided by our highly virtualized platform," says Landale, "standing up a system for a HANA instance of SAP is exactly the same as building any other database platform. While in the past it could easily take five weeks to set up a SAP HANA appliance, today we can have someone productive in virtualized SAP HANA in five days."

Another key benefit is increased flexibility and agility. "In the world of physical SAP HANA, if we were to make a dedicated investment of capital in a certain-size infrastructure for a customer and their needs changed, we would be challenged in trying to reuse the resource," says Landale. "Whereas if a customer's instance of SAP HANA is virtualized, we can just pull those resources away and allocate them to the next customer."

Finally, Secure-24 can use the same virtual-layer disaster recovery it does for its non–SAP HANA systems, which means disaster recovery across Secure-24's entire platform is less complex and can be managed with less administrative overhead.

Looking Ahead

With Secure-24 continuing to gain the benefits of running SAP HANA over the vSphere environment, Landale expects more and more customers to embrace the virtualized in-memory platform. As for the company's own partnership with VMware, Landale and colleagues see it continuing to provide significant advantages. "The fact that VMware is committed to providing product, architectural, and strategic direction to us at a very high level means that we see the partnership continuing for a long, long time."

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