BOBST GROUP

"One of our first virtualization projects consisted of converting our entire Siebel environment from physical to virtual. We were extremely surprised with the results; none of the users noticed the conversion. The old environment was running for years before, so the users were used to how things worked. In one weekend we did the complete migration to virtual servers–on Friday the workers logged out of Siebel and on Monday they returned to using it. They remarked absolutely nothing. No reactions, no complaints. There were no performance issues at any level. After this experience, we deployed ESX in multiple sites worldwide, converted everything to virtual, and just threw away the old physical machines. We now have a VMware first policy where all new servers are VMware virtual machines."

— Christian Rieder
IT Infrastructure Manager, Bobst Group

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Challenge

Respond to rapid business growth with more efficient and adaptable IT strategies

Solution

Adopt a VMware first policy and leverage VMware to quickly deploy mission critical applications such as SAP ERP, Siebel, Hyperion and Oracle 10 worldwide while maintaining performance and improving availability.

VMware at work

VMware Infrastructure 3 Enterprise, featuring:

- VMware ESX 3.5
- VMware VMotion
- VMware High Availability (HA)
- VMware Distributed Resource Scheduler (DRS)
- VMware vCenter Server

VMware Lab Manager

Bobst Group

Bobst Group—with its trade names BOBST, ASITRADE, MARTIN, RAPIDEX, ATLAS, FISCHER & KRECKE, GENERAL, KOCHSIEK, ROTOMEC, SCHIAVI, and TITAN, is the worldwide leading supplier of equipment and services to packaging manufacturers in the folding carton, corrugated board, and flexible material industries. The group comprises over thirty companies around the world and has manufacturing facilities in Switzerland, France, Italy, England, Germany, Brazil, China, and India.

Bobst Group began its virtualization journey in 2003, as part of its CRM initiative. "We started with ESX 1.5, as we were migrating from Siebel 99 to Siebel 7.5. We had three production servers running on physical servers: the database server, application server, and web server. We virtualized the doc server and the complete dev and test environment. In addition to our headquarters in Lausanne, Switzerland, we deployed to sites in New Jersey and Singapore. So we had three setups of Siebel servers in three zones," explains Rieder.

Then, two years ago Rieder's team migrated everything to virtual infrastructure. "This project consisted of converting our entire Siebel environment from physical to virtual. We were extremely surprised with the results; none of the users noticed the conversion. The old environment was running for years before, so the users were used to how things worked. In one weekend we did the complete migration to virtual servers–on Friday the workers logged out of Siebel and on Monday they returned to using it. They remarked absolutely nothing. No reactions, no complaints. There were no performance issues at any level. After this experience, we deployed ESX in multiple sites worldwide, converted everything to virtual, and just threw away the old physical machines. We now have a VMware first policy where all new servers are VMware virtual machines."

Now that the Siebel servers have been successfully virtualized in Lausanne, New Jersey, and Singapore, among other sites, everything is running smoothly. According to Rieder, the smooth transition to a virtualized environment, as well as the ease and stability of running the Siebel solution on VMware Infrastructure, has not gone unnoticed: "Our database administrators are absolutely pleased with VMware. They were reluctant to accept the virtualization plan at first, because they questioned the stability and performance of Siebel on virtual machines. Now they see that Siebel runs just as well on a virtual machine as it does on a physical one. Plus, the time required for system updates has been drastically reduced, and VMware HA and DRS ensure that the systems are always up and running. They have no objections now and are on board with our future virtualization plans."

vmware®

DEPLOYMENT ENVIRONMENT

- ESX 3.5 running on Sun Blade 8000 servers attached to EMC CLARiiON, EMC Symmetrix, and HDS USP 1000 SANs
- Guest operating systems: Windows 2003 Server and SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 10
- Virtualized production applications: Siebel 7.5, Oracle Database 10, Hyperion, SAP ERP, ADS 7.0 / BI 7.0, Microsoft Exchange 2003, SharePoint, and Active Directory

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Expanding Business Needs Call for Timely Solutions

Today, the IT department supports nearly 5,000 people worldwide. As the company continues to grow, the ability to adapt to changing markets and business needs is imperative. The IT department bears the brunt of this ever-changing business environment. "The scope of our activity has increased dramatically. We bought a lot of companies. We had to install infrastructure at affiliates. We had 100 servers in 2003, and now we have 400," remarks Rieder. Fortunately, VMware provides the solutions that Bobst Group needs to respond to the rapidly increasing IT load. "We are using VMware Infrastructure 3 Enterprise, particularly VMware HA and DRS, to ensure that we have zero downtime at our headquarters and 10 other sites. VMware Lab Manager is also a big plus for us; we rely on it quite intensively to clone production environments and validate any changes. VMware has streamlined management of our IT infrastructure, allowing IT resources to focus on more strategic tasks. As a result, the size of our team has stayed relatively consistent despite the rapid growth of our infrastructure," says Rieder.

The company's VMware first policy further supports the fast-paced IT environment. Bobst Group has virtualized many of its mission-critical applications including its Oracle databases to ensure easier management and high availability. "For Oracle 8 and Oracle 9, we had physical machines. For Oracle 10, we decided to go entirely virtual. We have two different kinds of databases: dedicated databases for large applications, such as SAP and Siebel, and general databases connected to several smaller applications. All of our databases are performing well and running reliably," says Rieder. In regards to Oracle support, Rieder says that it has never been a problem. "We never tell them it's virtual because Oracle runs the same on both physical and virtual machines. We have never had an issue getting support from Oracle, or any other software manufacturer for that matter."

Part of the SAP environment at Bobst is also virtual. "We decided to also virtualize several components of our SAP ERP 6.0 environment including our entire Business Intelligence," Rieder comments. "In addition to great performance, we saw extreme value in VMware when we were able to deploy our R&D Solution – Dassault Systems Smarteam R18 -- in our datacenter in Brazil without ever leaving our main datacenter in Lausanne. It would have taken so much more time and money if we had to deploy oh physical machines and fly to Brazil."

As for future virtualization plans, Bobst Group is interested in VMware solutions for automating disaster recovery. "We are investigating VMware Site Recovery Manager. I think using this software would greatly enhance our flexibility, because we would not have to run scripts for validation," says Rieder. In the meantime, Bobst Group will continue to expand its virtualization footprint by deploying more and more virtual machines in sites worldwide. "Right now we have about 400 virtual machines, and I would not be surprised if within six months we have 50 more," forecasts Rieder.

Results

- Virtualized 80 percent of IT environment
- Seamlessly migrated Siebel system to virtual infrastructure in one weekend
- Decreased deployment time for a new Hyperion implementation from three-four weeks to one day
- Completely eliminated unplanned downtime
- Streamlined management of IT infrastructure, allowing redirection of IT resources to more strategic tasks

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