WaTech Future-Proofs Its Mission-Critical Mainframe With Ensono

Ensono implemented its mainframe-as-a-service solution to support mission-critical services for WaTech's state agencies while also locking in an average of a 25% cost-saving thanks to the economies of scale and efficiency. Its scalable solution was delivered in partnership with Dell Technologies' latest mainframe storage and backup solutions.

CLIENT

Washington Technology Solutions (WaTech) is one of many state-run consolidated technology services agencies. It offers public agencies and municipalities a wrapper for Enterprise IT services covering IT support, strategy, and security with the goal of driving cost savings through efficiency and the economies of scale.

Through its State Data Center, WaTech offered a high-availability mainframe platform to support mission-critical applications such as social and healthcare services, procurement, billing, and payroll.

By sharing fixed costs such as premises, hardware, and personnel, the idea was that WaTech could pool its purchasing power and share services such as cybersecurity. WaTech's charter is to offer value-for-money for its agencies and municipalities but in reality, in late 2019 they began mapping out a new strategy to enhance the solutions that it could offer to its stakeholders.

CHALLENGE

WaTech's immediate challenge was the existing mainframe systems were reaching end of life and needed to be replaced. Furthermore, the current solution wasn't resilient to modern standards; although it had been reliable to date, by running in a single data center complemented with a slow offsite tape backup solution, there was potential for a long outage in a disaster recovery scenario.

WaTech had a wider concern around skills and retaining the staff to run its systems effectively. Many were approaching retirement and with mainframe skills becoming increasingly sought-after, WaTech was concerned about a future skills gap.

There was also a fundamental issue at play. WaTech wasn't delivering the expected value for the agencies and municipalities. The high overhead costs of its data center along with high staffing costs meant that it was an expensive option. In addition, as hosting costs were shared between agencies, whenever workloads migrated off the mainframe it increased costs for the remaining tenants. There were concerns about being the "last man standing" and being left with high fixed costs for mission-critical workloads that couldn't be moved.

SOLUTION

Ensono proposed that WaTech leverages its scalable mainframe-as-a-service solution based out of its Omaha and Downers Grove data centers. Not only would this give WaTech the latest hardware, it would solve its skills concerns and give it a scalable solution.

As part of the solution, Ensono leveraged its close partnership with Dell Technologies to offer the latest mainframe storage and backup technology and collaborate as one team to formulate a seamless migration strategy with minimal downtime and zero impact on the performance of the production systems.

The migration began with a transition team to shadow WaTech's mainframe staff. The team spent five weeks working directly with the support staff at the State Data Center to fully understand and document WaTech's particular setup and ensure they had no problem reproducing it in Omaha and Downers Grove – the two Ensono data centers. Following this period, Ensono moved to remote management of the State Data Center while the team started the process of migrating data across. The final stage of the migration was the complete move to Ensono's own mainframe-as-a-service solution in its data centers – this would happen over a weekend to mitigate the impact of any unforeseen problems.

The new Dell Technologies storage solution includes two Dell EMC PowerMax 8000 all flash arrays. By replacing outdated spinning-disk technology, the storage arrays are not only a magnitude faster in terms of performance, they also significantly reduce the power and cooling requirement of the mainframe system. The backup solution consists of the Dell EMC Disk Library for Mainframe (DLM) coupled with a pair of Dell EMC PowerProtect Data Domain 6300s.

RESULTS

With Ensono and Dell Technologies' expertise, solutions and support, the original vision of WaTech and its consolidated technology services has finally been realized.

Agencies are able to futureproof themselves with resilient technology infrastructure as well as reap the benefits of an average of 25% cost savings with some agencies saving upwards of 30%.

The mainframe solution isn't just set up to allow for expansion, it can also scale down as required. This means that when agencies do transition workloads off mainframe, other agencies won't be negatively impacted with an increased share of the costs.

This flexibility, combined with Ensono's premier consultancy in areas such as API connectivity, means agencies have the power to add cloud-connectivity to their mainframe services and explore new modernization paths. Agencies can also now build new Web-based services on their legacy mainframe applications.

Most importantly, the state now has confidence in its long-term technology infrastructure strategy. Ensono has WaTech covered in both skills and technology. As long as the state needs mainframe services, Ensono will be there to support it.

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