



Olam transforms agriculture business with Nutanix Cloud Infrastructure

Using Nutanix, Olam improves the quality of produce and the sustainability of farming across the world

To create safer, more efficient and sustainable ways of operating, Olam chose a Nutanix Cloud Infrastructure, unifying management across hybrid clouds and gaining the performance and reliability for its mission-critical workloads. The company, which has successfully scaled the platform to support 95 percent of applications, is now driving its end-to-end digital transformation strategy using Nutanix.

Today, it ensures 99.999 percent availability and has reduced IT incidents by 85 percent. Server utilization has risen to 70 percent while infrastructure costs have fallen 30 percent. When the pandemic struck, Olam was able to react quickly, ramping up the virtual desktop infrastructure to support 1,500 remote workers, gaining 100 percent end-user satisfaction across the business. Plus, Nutanix today is supporting the company's increasing use of edge computing and Internet of Things (IoT) technologies to better manage remote sites.

KEY RESULTS

- **High availability**
Ensures 99.999% availability and reduces IT incident by 85%
- **High Performance and flexible scaling**
Enabled rapid scaling of VDI to 1,500 staff in 3-4 weeks
- **Improved TCO**
Server utilization improved to 70% from 30%; lowered infrastructure costs by 30%

INDUSTRY

Agriculture & mining

GEO

APJ

WEBSITE

www.olamgroup.com

APPLICATIONS

- SAP HANA
- Microsoft Exchange
- Microsoft SQL Server and MySQL databases
- Virtual desktop infrastructure
- Skype
- Internet of Things (IoT)
- Edge computing

PRODUCTS

Nutanix Cloud Infrastructure

- AOS Storage
- AHV Virtualization

Nutanix Cloud Manager

- Intelligent Operations (formerly Prism Pro)

Nutanix Unified Storage

- Files Storage



“With Nutanix, we are digitally transforming the agri-business, improving the quality of produce and the sustainability of production while giving many farmers a first-time opportunity to improve yields.”

- Thiagaraja Manikandan, Chief Technology Officer, Olam International



“The beauty of our Nutanix Cloud Infrastructure is that we can seamlessly work through the seasonal peaks, scaling our hybrid clouds and launching dev and test environments with a lot of flexibility through a single management pane.”

- Akhil Mehrotra, vice president, IT infrastructure at Mindsprint, part of Olam

CHALLENGES

Olam International (Olam) is a major food and agri-business organization, operating in 60 countries, supplying food and industrial raw materials to more than 20,900 customers. Its value chain includes farming, origination, processing and distribution operations. Headquartered in Singapore, the company is among the world's largest suppliers of cocoa beans, and a Fortune 500 company.

Crops may grow in the ground just as always, but everybody involved from buying raw materials and planting seeds to harvesting crops and getting produce into stores is using more technology than ever. Therefore, the time was right for Olam to launch a bold strategy to remove the complexity of its legacy IT and completely digitize operations end-to-end, leveraging advances in hybrid cloud, Internet of Things (IoT), edge computing and analytics. Says Akhil Mehrotra, vice president, IT infrastructure at Mindsprint, which is part of Olam and responsible for IT, “We wanted the flexibility to be able to give internal users the right technology to match each business need.”

SOLUTION

After reviewing solutions from multiple vendors, Olam chose Nutanix, whose Nutanix Cloud Infrastructure could help the company adopt the advances in cloud, IoT, edge computing and analytics that it was looking for. Olam started with a three-node Nutanix hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI) to power its hybrid cloud while providing a multi-cloud management capability. The company then proceeded to migrate workloads over to Nutanix, buying additional nodes as legacy hardware went end-of-life. Mr Mehrotra says, “We have more than 100 Nutanix nodes right now, supporting multiple workloads. These include our Microsoft Exchange, Skype, VMware VDI [virtual desktop infrastructure] and our edge, processing data from IoT sensors at some of our remote production sites.”

Nutanix nodes are also running Microsoft SQL Server and MySQL databases and a SAP HANA environment that supports 24 business-critical SAP systems. “It’s a huge environment,” says Mr Mehrotra. “Our business analytics workload alone is more than 3 TBs [terabytes] and growing.” To simplify management, Mr Mehrotra’s team use Nutanix Intelligent Operations (formerly Prism Pro), which automates common tasks and generates actionable insights. “Scaling vertically and horizontally is seamless, and we can move workloads during migrations without having to raise tickets,” he says. Olam has deployed Nutanix Files Storage, a software-defined, scale-out storage solution, to support its VDI and to simplify the administration of file servers. “It helps us avoid having a single point of failure and creates a highly scalable, easy-to-manage file server stack,” Mr Mehrotra says.

CUSTOMER OUTCOMES

End-to-end digital transformation strategy

Olam is successfully re-imagining global agriculture and food systems, establishing more efficient and sustainable ways to deliver products and services in agri-business. Its digital strategy is enabling new kinds of interactions with consumers and farmers through multiple channels. Plus, the company is using hybrid cloud, IoT, edge computing and analytics to ensure its production sites regularly hit their targets. “The Nutanix Cloud Platform is an integrated technology play,” says Thiagaraja Manikandan, Chief Technology Officer, Olam International. “It’s allowing Olam to unify its digital transformation strategy.”

Greater agility with environments ready in minutes not weeks

When new business opportunities come along or Olam needs to respond to a changing situation, its IT is flexible enough for the organization to take the initiative. The IT team no longer needs 8-12 weeks to get everything in place for new environments to support the business—it takes them just minutes. Comments Mr Mehrotra, “I have a single Nutanix cluster supporting our SAP systems and, using Nutanix Intelligent Operations, I just add a new workload to the cluster to support whatever the requirement. Ask me for it, and it’s there within the hour.”

Ensure 99.999% availability and reduces IT incidents by 85%

Even though the architecture must support operations across 60 countries, maintaining uptime 24/7 isn’t an issue with Nutanix. The company is achieving 99.999 percent availability for its applications running on both private and public clouds. Furthermore, thanks to proactive management using Nutanix Intelligent Operations, the number of help-desk tickets compared to the legacy three-infrastructure has plummeted. “The reliability of our Nutanix Cloud Infrastructure has resulted in an 85 percent drop in the number of reported IT incidents,” says Mr Mehrotra.

In the event of any disruption to the Nutanix platform, Olam has a disaster recovery strategy in place to minimize any of fallout from the situation. “We replicate all our data with Nutanix and can failover without any human intervention, giving us an RPO (recovery point objective) of one hour across a geographically dispersed infrastructure,” says Mr Mehrotra.

Increase server utilization to 70% from 20-30%

By eliminating standalone compute and storage layers, Olam has boosted resource utilization. Mr Mehrotra describes breaking free from the average utilization rate of 20-30 percent around for three-tier infrastructures. “The beauty of the Nutanix Cloud Infrastructure is you remove all that, and hence our utilization is never lower than 70 percent nowadays.”

Utilization increased the moment Olam consolidated its hardware 60 percent by moving to the Nutanix platform. And while it has expanded the solution over time, it’s done so in such a way as to maintain the 70 percent utilization figure. “Our IT is much more sustainable with Nutanix, growing in a very controlled way as Olam’s operations strengthen,” says Mr Mehrotra.

Reduces infrastructure costs by 30%

The move to Nutanix took a sizeable chunk out of Olam’s IT expenses. The reduction in hardware costs, power, and cooling, as well as management time has lowered infrastructure spend by 30 percent. Not only is this a great figure to report back to the business, but it potentially frees up resources for further investment. The last point is made clear by Mr Manikandan. “You can focus more of your energy on creating a world-class infrastructure,” he says.

Launched VDI for 1,500 in 3-4 weeks

The Nutanix Cloud Infrastructure has also given Olam a new level of agility, made evident when COVID-19 struck, and many employees had to work remotely. “We were able to massively scale up our VDI on Nutanix to support around 1,500 employees in just 3-4 weeks,” says Mr Mehrotra. The VDI ensured secure homeworking at a critical moment, helping minimize the pandemic’s disruption to operations. “Employees across 35 countries had remote access to the data they needed to get through this challenging time,” he adds.

Gains 100% end-user satisfaction

The response to COVID-19 has gained Nutanix a lot of fans across OLAM. Indeed, people’s feelings towards IT have never been more positive, and the consensus is that technology is more supportive than ever. “There’s 100 percent satisfaction with the Nutanix solution,” states Mr Mehrotra.

Mr Mehrotra believes a lot of employee positivity is because people see no drop off in performance, even when their work is putting a lot more pressure on the IT systems. “Nutanix automates processes like increasing storage I/O so we avoid storage bottlenecks or applications crashing and problems on the frontend for users. It’s business as usual as far as everyone is concerned.”

THE NEXT STEP

Olam is planning to test both Nutanix Calm, a multi-cloud application lifecycle management framework, and Nutanix Era for database-as-a-service capabilities. These solutions are part of a wide-ranging IT roadmap that also includes the continued use of edge computing for processing and storing data closer to where it’s needed. Mr Mehrotra says, “In our roadmap, we have a lot of legacy applications to be modernized, and I can do the work easily by using Nutanix to migrate them to the cloud and doing the work from there. In addition, I’m seeing use cases for bringing workloads back to on-premises private clouds and with Nutanix that’s easier for me to do.”

Mr Manikandan concludes, “Our digital transformation will continue with the support of our Nutanix Cloud Infrastructure, with innovation powered by our dynamic HCI.”



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