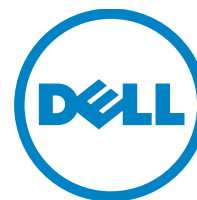


Hosting company brings new virtual private server offering to up to 10,000 customers, while cutting energy consumption



- Backup, recovery and archiving
- Cloud computing
- Data consolidation and management
- Green efficiency
- Virtualization



"From the start, Dell consultants worked closely with Microsoft to understand what we wanted to do and the best way to bring everything together in the cloud. We were impressed with Dell's approach and the quality of its technology."

Stephen Holford, Marketing Director, Fasthosts

Customer profile

| | |
|------------|--|
| Company: | Fasthosts |
| Industry: | Hosting |
| Country: | United Kingdom |
| Employees: | 160 |
| Website: | www.fasthosts.co.uk |

Business need

Fasthosts wanted to expand the business and bring new services to its customers with an enhanced virtual private server offering.

Solution

Working with Dell and Microsoft, Fasthosts deployed a cloud infrastructure with Hyper-V™, Dell™ PowerEdge™ servers and Dell EqualLogic storage.



Benefits

- Infrastructure opens up new streams of business
- Easy expansion to around 10,000 virtual servers
- Customers only pay for what they need
- Rack space cut to ratio of 12:1 with energy-efficient environment
- Faster maintenance with Dell ProSupport Enterprise-Wide Contract (EWC)

With more than 400,000 direct customers and 6,000 reseller partners, Fasthosts is now the UK's largest web hosting company in the UK. Formed in 1999, the key to Fasthosts' success has been its quick response to changing customer needs and dedication to IT innovation. Recently, the company has developed relationships with channel partners to bring its cloud infrastructure to even more customers around the world.

"This will really help us expand the business – we plan to bring up to 10,000 virtual machines into this environment."

Stephen Holford, Marketing Director, Fasthosts

Fasthosts was quick to realise the benefits of cloud computing and has pioneered the use of this technology in the UK hosting market. As it worked increasingly with channel partners, Stephen Holford, Marketing Director at Fasthosts, explains how the firm saw an opportunity to offer a new type of service. He says: "We're constantly assessing the market for opportunities and ways to improve our service. We saw that a self-service offering in conjunction with a channel partner could be a useful option for small and medium-sized enterprises (SMEs). Many small businesses are looking for more flexibility with both on-premises and off-site services – but they want to maintain control. We wanted to offer this service." In addition, Fasthosts was looking to make the datacentre more efficient, cutting energy consumption, while increasing flexibility and resilience.

Having forged a strong relationship with Dell over the past few years, Fasthosts spoke to its Dell account managers about its plans for a new environment and to Microsoft about the latest innovations in Windows Server® 2008 R2 Datacenter with Hyper-V™. It wanted to deploy servers and storage that would work most effectively with this technology and meet the company's performance and energy efficiency needs. Dell's long-standing alliance with Microsoft and access to key Microsoft architecture helps it to develop and deliver solutions that are business-ready. Holford says: "From the start, Dell consultants worked closely with Microsoft to understand what we wanted to do and to bring everything in the cloud in the best way possible. We were impressed with Dell's approach and the quality of its technology."

Thorough approach at the consultancy stage ensures project success

Careful planning was the key to the success of this project. Dell consultants came on-site to Fasthosts to decide what technology would work best and guide the team. This was particularly important for the storage environment as Fasthosts worked with Dell EqualLogic experts to understand the full capabilities of the latest storage arrays. This included EqualLogic workshops and the provision of a test unit for a few months before deployment. Holford says: "With EqualLogic test units and the expertise

Technology at work

Services

Dell Consulting Services

Dell ProSupport Enterprise-Wide Contract (EWC)
– Dell Online Self Dispatch

Hardware

Dell™ PowerEdge™ blade servers with Intel® Xeon® Processors X5550

Dell EqualLogic PS6500 storage area network (SAN)

Software

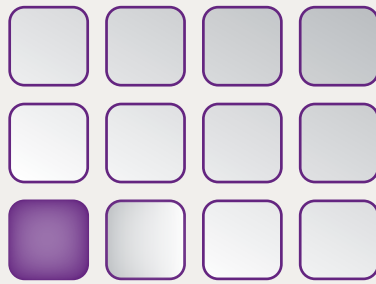
Microsoft® System Center suite

Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager 2007 R2

Windows Server® 2008 R2 Datacenter
– Hyper-V

Windows Server 2008 R2 Web Edition/Standard

Rack space cut to ratio of 12:1 with energy-efficient environment



of the Dell consultants we were able to test various scenarios and the viability of our concept before committing ourselves. Compared to other vendors, Dell went above and beyond the call of duty."

Fast, simple expansion to meet growing business needs

Fasthosts has a flexible environment, which can conformably provision thousands of virtual private servers. The company has also deployed Windows Server 2008 R2, including the latest version of Hyper-V virtualization software on 48 Dell™ PowerEdge™ servers with Intel® Xeon® Processors X5550 and 64 gigabytes of RAM. This gives the company 768 logical processors spread over four Hyper-V clusters, creating an average of 30 virtual servers per blade. For storage, Fasthosts uses 10 Dell EqualLogic PS6500 storage area networks (SANs) creating a powerful and flexible environment to host virtual private servers for its customers. It's easy for Fasthosts to add servers and EqualLogic units to meet demand, using Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager 2007 R2, as the physical infrastructure grows. Holford explains: "This combination of Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager, Dell PowerEdge servers and Dell EqualLogic storage is extremely scalable. We customised our settings for a fast deployment that configures to the network automatically. We can deploy virtual private servers from our own defined templates. This will really help us expand the business – we plan to bring up to 10,000 virtual machines into this environment."

Fasthosts pioneers new approach to cloud computing

In business terms, this environment has already proved invaluable to Fasthosts, helping the company launch a new virtual private server offering for direct customers, and, more recently, for users through channel partners under the brand Rise. Now customers can choose an option that suits them. This ranged from a fully managed service to complete personal control via a web-based control panel that makes provisioning, upgrading, monitoring and re-configuring the virtual server easy. In this way, customers have ultimate command over their virtual private servers and their costs.

Fasthosts is also working on new themed solutions based on this virtual server offering, including tailored solutions for e-commerce, disaster recovery and email. In addition, the team is working towards linking its cloud environment with customers' on-premises solutions, providing new backup and disaster recovery possibilities for small businesses. Holford says: "Working with Dell and Microsoft has allowed us to create a new brand and stream of business in the cloud – and we're looking to grow even more. For example, we intend to use Dell EqualLogic SANs to provide multiple time-delayed backups of customer virtual private servers for disaster recovery and business continuity."

"Customers only have pay for what they need in their private cloud. It's this flexibility that customers and our partners have responded to and helped us to expand the business."

Stephen Holford, Marketing Director, Fasthosts

Users take control of their environments

Through the customised graphical user interface, Hyper-V, Microsoft System Center and Dell PowerEdge servers, customers are able to take control of their hosted environments. For example, they can set up automatic updates and dynamically assign extra capacity exactly when they need it. Customers can specify the threshold with an email or text message alert informing them that their service is reaching capacity. Then, they increase memory and storage to their server through the control panel. Holford says: "Now, our customers can use the service they need when they need it. For example, if you know you'll require extra capacity for a few days, you can assign this instantly through the interface. Customers only have to pay for what they need. It's this flexibility that customers and our partners have responded to and helped us to expand the business."

Energy-efficient environment cuts rack space to a ratio of 12:1

The virtualization platform delivered by the combination of Hyper-V, Dell PowerEdge servers and Dell EqualLogic storage helps Fasthosts keep costs down – both in terms of electricity consumption and datacentre space. By using the latest Intel technology, the PowerEdge servers only use the power that's required, helping Fasthosts to consolidate more customers onto a single blade. Holford says: "In this environment, we can fit approximately 480 customers in just

one Dell PowerEdge M1000e blade enclosure – compared to provisioning and providing 480 physical servers, which would take up approximately 12 racks of physical datacentre space. This means a better deal for us and for our customers."

Smooth running guaranteed with Dell support

The IT team at Fasthosts has a first-rate understanding of the technology in this environment, but it also has constant access to Dell's highest level of pro-active support with Dell ProSupport Enterprise-Wide Contract (EWC). This means Fasthosts can talk to an engineer whenever they need, and, if necessary, bring someone from Dell on-site within one working day. Furthermore, key members of the team are trained by Dell to use the Dell Online Self Dispatch service. This means Fasthosts can talk to an engineer whenever it needs to, diagnose hardware faults internally and order replacement parts without having to go through the Dell support centre. Holford says: "Our business relies on delivering a highly available environment to our customers, which is why Dell ProSupport Enterprise-Wide Contract with Dell Online Self Dispatch is a valuable service to us. We can solve hardware issues faster, plus we have peace of mind that Dell consultants will be on-site quickly when we need them."

For more information on this case study go to: dell.com/casestudies/emea and dell.co.uk/casestudies



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