Manufacturer Reduces IT Workload with Reliable Data Centers

Executive Summary

- **Customer Name:** Helen of Troy Limited
- **Industry:** Manufacturing
- **Location:** Global
- **Number of Employees:** 1700

Challenge
- Standardizing global systems to improve manageability
- Enhancing efficiency and productivity for IT staff
- Increasing business continuity and preserving regulatory reporting

Solution
- Standardized data centers on virtualized Cisco UCS servers and Cisco fabric interconnect
- Implemented Veeam Backup & Replication to deliver reliable and fast backup and recovery

Results
- Reduced deployment time for data centers to one day
- Decreased recovery and restoration times
- Improved system reliability and redundancy

Technology / Application Partner
- Veeam Software

Helen of Troy uses Cisco UCS and Veeam to build reliable, global data centers managed from single location.

Challenge

Every day, millions of people around the world use Helen of Troy products to meet their beauty, health, and household needs. The company's brands include some of the most well-known names in the world: OXO, Honeywell, Braun, Vicks, Revlon, Vidal Sassoon, and Dr. Scholl's. Through intelligent acquisitions, Helen of Troy has grown to a billion-dollar company with 1700 employees around the world.

Despite the remarkable growth, Helen of Troy continues to run a lean IT department with only 3 engineers and 23 team members in total. For such a small team, providing consistent and global access to IT networks requires working as efficiently as possible. "Traveling 36 hours just to adjust a data center halfway around the world isn't the best use of our time," says Armando Gonzalez, technical infrastructure director at Helen of Troy Limited. "We needed a better way to manage data centers remotely."

Complicating the matter was the diverse IT infrastructure that resulted from acquisitions. After researching leaders in the server market, Helen of Troy decided to standardize on Cisco® Unified Data Center solutions including Unified Computing System™ (UCS®) servers to centralize management for remote data centers and improve power through reliable virtualization. By implementing a consistent Cisco data center environment, Helen of Troy also concentrates support on a single manufacturer for greater efficiency for its IT department.

In addition, reliable backup and recovery are an essential part of business for Helen of Troy. As part of a global corporation, the IT department must minimize downtime to provide around-the-clock connectivity for international offices. Reliable data storage is also essential to business continuity, especially as detailed documentation is a major part of certifications and meeting regulatory standards.

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>
> – Armando Gonzalez
>   Technical Infrastructure
>   Director
>   Helen of Troy Limited

"We had other backup solutions in place, but they were unreliable," says Wil Baca, system administrator at Helen of Troy Limited. "Our other backup solutions failed frequently, and it was difficult to pinpoint the cause of the errors." Helen of Troy searched for a solution that it could trust to backup and recover whole virtual machines and individual application items such as emails quickly. Market-leader Veeam Software offered a solution that met all of the company's requirements.

Solution

Helen of Troy is consolidating its eight data centers into five virtualized data centers built on Cisco UCS. Cisco UCS B200 M3 Blade Servers deliver performance and versatility for a broad range of workloads to support operations across the company. The 25 Cisco UCS B200 Blade Servers are about 97 percent virtualized and host 350 virtual machines, but the goal is to achieve 100 percent virtualization soon. Cisco UCS Manager 2.1a supports scalability in the data centers through policy-based management, service templates, and service profiles that enable IT staff to provision new virtual machines quickly.

Fast provisioning and the flexible Cisco UCS architecture strongly support business continuity worldwide. Rather than connecting to each individual server, the power and fabric in the Cisco UCS environment connect to each chassis. As a result, IT staff can add or remove servers without downtime. Data can easily be transferred between blades without affecting usability, and in case of an error, new virtual machines can be deployed on a different blade within minutes.

Cisco UCS 6296UP Fabric Interconnects connect to the switching core with 10 Gigabit uplinks. At the core, a pair of Cisco Catalyst® 6509 Series Switches with Virtual Switching System (VSS) 1440 deliver next-level network system virtualization. With the VSS, the two physical Cisco Catalyst 6509 Series Switches can operate as a single virtual switch to increase efficiency and bandwidth. "The storage connects directly to the fabric, so we're practically eliminating latency," says Gonzalez. "With multiple redundancies and incredible load balancing, the Cisco environment is helping us achieve amazing speeds between chassis."

Cisco UCS Manager and Cisco UCS Central add to the efficiencies in the data center by streamlining management for the IT team. Unlike Cisco UCS Manager, which is embedded in the fabric interconnects, Cisco UCS Central is a virtual machine image that can manage and provide visibility into Cisco UCS domains around the world from a single location. Helen of Troy also deploys Cisco Unified Communications Manager to manage and balance the load of the Cisco telephony systems that connect global offices to reduce the need for costly international phone bills.

As Helen of Troy consolidated its data centers and standardized on Cisco infrastructure, the company also deployed Veeam Backup & Replication, a product compatible with Cisco solutions, in one of its data centers as a trial run. Previous backup solutions were plagued with frequent errors. To make matters worse, the dashboards and reporting were unclear, making it difficult to pinpoint the cause. "After a week, we knew that Veeam was the correct choice for backup and recovery," says Baca. "It is completely intuitive to use, delivers visibility into backup, and most importantly, it works reliably."

Veeam Backup & Replication runs much more quickly, enabling Helen of Troy to back up many more servers. While backups currently take eight hours, trying to back up the same number of servers with another method would have taken 24 hours. Although Veeam quickly backs up entire virtual machines, Veeam also provides the ability to recover individual databases, files, and application items in minutes, such as a single email in

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Microsoft Exchange. "Previously, we could never be sure if files were being backed up correctly," says Baca. "Veeam has helped us reinforce our disaster recovery plans to ensure business continuity and compliance with regulatory requirements like the Sarbanes-Oxley Act."

Results

Cisco UCS Manager and Cisco UCS Central deliver visibility into the global data centers. IT staff can dynamically allocate vNICs, update firmware, and add a VLAN to any system from a single interface. "We can do 97 percent of our jobs remotely with Cisco, without needing to travel around the world or even bring the network offline," says Gonzalez. "This saves the company money, but more importantly, it allows us to spend our time more effectively."

Once service profiles are defined within Cisco UCS Manager, they can be automatically applied to equipment with the click of a button. IT staff can replace blade servers or provision virtual machines within minutes, but the efficiencies gained are particularly apparent when deploying entire data centers. Gonzalez spent several weeks building the first data center and creating templates and profiles. "With the standards in place, we built our second data center in only a day," says Gonzalez. "Once the chassis is connected, Cisco UCS Manager applies profiles automatically for fast roll out."

The ability to quickly deploy new virtual machines with Cisco UCS works with Veeam Backup & Replication to promote faster recovery times. The Instant VM Recovery feature in Veeam enables Helen of Troy to start failed machines directly from a backup.

In one case, a user's laptop was infected by a virus, which spread to the virtual server backing it up. The server contained mission-critical safety certifications for the company's entire product line. Using Instant VM Recovery, Helen of Troy started the virtual machine from a backup, carefully checked it for viruses, and had it back in production within two hours. "Veeam not only works well, but the operations are incredibly intuitive," says Baca. "We have such a small team that we don't always have time for training, but I quickly learned how to recover servers and add servers to backup jobs with a few clicks."

In another case, the Cisco Unity Server became corrupted during a scheduled downtime. Rebuilding the server usually takes a day or more, but Helen of Troy was able to restore the previous version from a backup in less than 30 minutes. "As a global company, we need to minimize downtime as much as possible," says Gonzalez. "With the reliability gained from Veeam and Cisco UCS, I can stop worrying about maintaining equipment and concentrate on doing what I was hired to do: innovate the IT infrastructure."

Next Steps

Having demonstrated the power of Cisco and Veeam in the first data center, Helen of Troy plans to standardize data center environments and disaster recovery worldwide.

Product List

Data Center Solutions
- Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS)
- Cisco UCS B200 M3 Blade Servers

Routing and Switching
- Cisco Catalyst 6509 Series Switches with Virtual Switching System (VSS) 1440
- Cisco UCS 6296UP Fabric Interconnects

Network Management
- Cisco UCS Manager 2.1a
- Cisco UCS Central

Security and VPN
- Cisco Adaptive Security Appliances (ASA)
- Cisco Email Security
- Cisco Web Security

Voice and IP Communications
- Cisco Unified Communications Manager
- Cisco Unity® Connection

Backup and Recovery Services
- Veeam Backup & Replication

Storage
- NetApp
- EqualLogic
- EMC

Applications
- Microsoft Exchange
- Microsoft SharePoint
- Oracle Demantra
- Oracle Business Intelligence

For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Unified Data Center, please visit: www.cisco.com/go/unifieddatacenter.

To find out more about Cisco UCS, please visit: www.cisco.com/go/ucs.

To find out more about Veeam, please visit: www.veeam.com.

To find out more about Veeam Backup & Replication, please visit https://marketplace.cisco.com/catalog/companies/veeam-software-corporation.

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