

INDUS Corporation



“Reliability and availability of our critical systems; lower cost; simplified management: Those are the key benefits we get from our hosted cloud solution. If I were starting a new company today, I wouldn’t build a physical datacenter. I’d call someone like Virtacore, and leverage virtualization solutions from VMware.”

– John Foley, Senior Manager, Infrastructure Technology, INDUS Corporation

KEY BENEFITS

Challenge

Increase reliability and agility, reduce costs of IT services for internal customers of leading Federal Information Technology solutions provider.

Solution

Engage VMware partner Virtacore to provide cloud-based hosting solution for INDUS mission-critical applications.

Results

- Increased system reliability and availability from estimated 95% to approximately 99.999%
- Simplified IT management, thereby reducing IT staff and saving 35% annually in salaries and benefits.
- Replaced aging IT infrastructure while avoiding capital and operating expenses.
- Increased agility to grow company and respond quickly to new customer demands.
- Preserved cash flow and eased business planning with predictable monthly costs.

INDUS Raises IT Reliability, Availability with Virtacore Cloud Hosting Solution

Government Contractor Engages VMware Partner to Eliminate Cost, Headaches of Physical Datacenter

Six months into his job as senior manager of infrastructure technology at INDUS Corporation, John Foley experienced the kind of datacenter crisis that IT executives dread: a HVAC systems breakdown in the company’s rented office space knocked the server room out of commission for a week.

“It was horrible,” he recalls. “Every minute of outage harms productivity and costs money.”

The experience underscored what INDUS already knew: The Company needed to eliminate datacenter vulnerabilities and increase business agility. An IT services firm that serves the U.S. government, INDUS was maturing from an entrepreneurial, do-it-yourself startup into a sophisticated enterprise poised for strategic growth. Hiring Foley was a step in that direction. Another was to engage VMware partner Virtacore Systems, Inc., to provide Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) in a hosted cloud computing environment.

“Reliability and availability of all our critical systems—that’s the central benefit,” Foley says. “I came onboard to improve INDUS’s responsiveness and customer service, and to reduce costs. The VMware-based hosting solution from Virtacore brings us near-perfect uptime reliability and reduces IT staffing expenses around 35% a year.”

INDUS Selects Hosted Cloud Solution from Virtacore

INDUS is a privately held, IT services provider that meets mission-critical requirements of United States Government Civilian, Defense, Homeland Security and Intelligence organizations. The company’s services include Secure Infrastructure Solutions, Actionable Intelligence, Software Applications Management and Enterprise IT.

The INDUS IT department serves two main types of internal customers: corporate users who run the company’s business systems and INDUS employees who work at customer sites on federal contracts. Everyone uses Microsoft Exchange email, which runs on a multi-terabyte Microsoft SQL database. Contract workers out in the field also use Deltek Time & Expense to fill out government-required daily timesheets. Corporate-office employees use the bulk of INDUS business applications, including Deltek Costpoint ERP software, which runs on Oracle Database 10g; and other collaboration and business intelligence applications. All of these applications now are hosted by Virtacore, as are others such as the BlackBerry Enterprise Server, print and file servers; and Microsoft Active Directory.

Foley had considered building a private cloud to upgrade the aging datacenter. However, the increasing maturity and lower cost of hosted solutions prompted him to assess service providers. He wanted a company with expertise, experience and a local presence near

VMWARE AT WORK

VMware vCloud™ Express

DEPLOYMENT ENVIRONMENT

Primary hardware:

- Dell Servers in Equinix datacenter
- Cogent IP network backbone

Guest operating systems:

Microsoft Windows XP
 Microsoft Windows Server 2003
 Microsoft Windows Server 2008

Primary software:

- Microsoft Exchange 2007
- Microsoft SQL
- Microsoft Active Directory
- Deltek Time & Expense
- Deltek Costpoint ERP
- Oracle Database 10g
- Microsoft Office SharePoint
- BlackBerry Enterprise Server
- MessageLabs anti-spam and anti-virus
- McAfee ePolicy Orchestrator
- File and print servers; proxy server

INDUS's Vienna, VA., headquarters. "I wanted to be able to grab somebody's necktie if I had to," Foley says. He also required a robust datacenter infrastructure to link with INDUS's Cogent Communications IP network backbone. Virtacore met all selection criteria, performed a successful proof-concept-project and won the contract.

"Virtacore brings the experience, knowledge and quality we need in a partner," Foley says. "The company can support all of our needs up the stack, including value-added services such as anti-virus, email and desktop virtualization."

Virtacore is a leading provider of hybrid cloud computing solutions to the mid-market. Its vCore platform is built on VMware, and powers both their private (vFabric Enterprise) and public (vCloud Express) hosting solutions. The fact that Virtacore's platform is built on VMware technology was a major factor in INDUS's choice of vendor.

"We didn't want to risk pursuing other virtualization options," Foley says. "VMware is the market leader and brings the most mature virtualization technologies."

Another plus was Virtacore's use of Equinix, Inc.'s global platform of International Business Exchange (IBX) datacenters.

"I could never afford to build a datacenter like Virtacore provides through Equinix. It's a true 100 percent available datacenter with multiple carriers, power grids, generators and uninterrupted power supplies (UPS)," Foley says. "I put a couple of switches over there and got another link from Cogent directly to the Equinix datacenter. The speed is fantastic. I don't need any WAN load balancers or anything like that. I'm not going over the Internet; it's a secure private link."

INDUS still runs a legacy, non-virtualized datacenter that hosts test and development software, as well as the corporate intranet. The intranet, which runs on a Microsoft Office SharePoint Server, is slated to move soon to Virtacore; the supporting third-party development software is already there. Other datacenter applications, including large geo-spatial databases INDUS uses for an environmental agency, will likely migrate over time. "One of my longer-term goals is to turn the lights out in that server room," Foley says. "Then I can eliminate the associated effort and costs for managing hardware."

High Availability, Lower Cost, Simplified Management, Strategic Growth

The Virtacore-hosted INDUS cloud environment runs on three Dell servers. Or maybe it's four—Foley doesn't know exactly and doesn't want to. Simplified management is one of the great advantages of the hosted solution.

"I told Virtacore what we were running the applications on in our datacenter—memory, processors and storage requirements. They went off and built something, and said we could start moving stuff over. I don't even know the hardware specs, and that's how I like it. The hosted solution is very easy to get your arms around. You have a predictable monthly expense that's easy to control."

The hosted cloud solution delivers enterprise-class infrastructure without the capital expense of building a datacenter. It lowers operating costs and makes them predictable, preserving cash flow. And, it streamlines management to the point where Foley has been able to reduce his IT staff in half.

"The whole idea of having a team of IT folks—you have to maintain a wide range of in-house skills and you have to manage more people. There are many elements to the IT environment, from database to network to server administration and patches. It's a lot of work. All of that is going away with the hosted cloud environment. From the management point of view, it's a ticket, a phone call. If I need a server, Virtacore does it quickly and efficiently, thanks to the fast provisioning capabilities of VMware virtualization."

“I tell my peers, if I were to start a new company I would not build a datacenter,” he adds. “I would get on the phone and call someone like Virtacore. All I would install is network access.”

The advantage of the hosted cloud solution to INDUS end users is core-system availability. Foley estimates guaranteed uptime has increased from some 95 percent to more like 99.999 percent.

“Before, our datacenter was subject to outages due to electrical or water problems. I want IT service to be like a dial tone—something you can assume is there for you. With the Virtacore IaaS solution, we expect four or five nines of availability.”

Next Steps: VMware View to Simplify Desktop Management

Foley’s next target for virtualization is desktops. Right now INDUS employees use a wide range of PCs, which increases the IT maintenance and management burden. In particular, Foley wishes to avoid the hardware and memory upgrade costs of migrating from Microsoft Windows XP to Microsoft Windows 7. He’s engaged Virtacore to develop a prototype environment for business users, with an eye toward desktops eventually being virtualized.

“The desktop is the piece of equipment everybody touches, and it has to work,” he says. “With desktop virtualization comes a standardized, reliable infrastructure with far fewer management headaches. If you’re an end user, all you need is Internet access and you can get your desktop from anywhere.”

The reliability and management ease gained from Virtacore puts INDUS in a strong position for strategic growth. INDUS is now incorporating the use of this technology into its responses to its federal customer’s requests for information and requests for proposal. Meeting INDUS’ potential new customer’s deployment and performance requirements will be much easier, Foley says, thanks to increased business agility with the hosted solution. That gives INDUS a competitive leg up in landing new contracts.

“The U.S. government is looking aggressively at cloud-based solutions,” Foley says. “When I started out in the IT business, we used service bureaus that specialized in providing computing power from a mainframe. In many ways, with a company like Virtacore we’ve come full circle. What’s changed is the unprecedented power and agility now possible in the cloud environment enabled by VMware.”

