NetApp®

SolidFire Success Story

We Make Desktop Virtualization Simple for Everyone

HostedNetwork™

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Industry
Service provider

The Solution
- SolidFire SF3010 with 48TB of effective capacity deployed in Australia-based data center
- Powers white-label VMware Horizon Desktop as a Service offering
- Guaranteed Quality of Service, inline deduplication critical in VDI environment
- Scale-out design enables Hosted Network to grow infrastructure granularly alongside business

Benefits
- Scale-out
- Guaranteed Performance
- Automated Management
- High Availability
- In-Line Efficiency

Australia-based cloud service provider Hosted Network provides white-label Desktop as a Service (DaaS) solutions with partners in Australia and New Zealand. In short, Hosted Network sells technology to partners who then sell that solution as their own. Hosted Network worked closely with VMware to become just the second Australian service provider to launch a Horizon DaaS solution — offering it through the channel and also acting as a complete support network for its partners.

How Hosted Network solved storage issues so partners didn't need to

Virtual Desktop Infrastructures (VDI) enable countless advantages to enterprise customers, like empowering a remote workforce. But VDI also introduces significant challenges. Namely, that legacy storage cannot meet the performance requirements of storage-intensive, multi-tenant environments. Hosted Network faced the more daunting task of needing to ensure storage performance for an infrastructure that included its own workloads, all its service providers, as well as all its service providers' end-customers.

Enter storage Quality of Service (QoS) provided by SolidFire's all flash storage platform, the critical element of the Hosted Network next generation infrastructure that enables the delivery of predictable, reliable performance across every workload. "The storage QoS was a big selling point from our point of view because we can guarantee performance in a VDI world," Ben said. "We can control things like patching, and when you log in each morning, at a granular level."

What QoS means to Hosted Network's customers

By giving its partners the ability to guarantee storage performance, Hosted Network helped overcome the variable performance spikes inherent to I/O-hungry VDI workloads. Boot storms, antivirus scans, and routine maintenance and patches ordinarily tax the performance of traditional storage systems. All of those significant issues became complete non-issues with QoS.

"Unlike a lot of the other vendors that require us to fork out a huge amount up front, SolidFire allows us to grow node by node. We can go to market with leading storage, leading compute, and still have money left over for our marketing campaigns and things that grow our business as well."

Ben Town
Hosted Network Managing Director

The Whole Story

Hosted Network uses VMware's Horizon DaaS, which delivers cloud hosted desktops and applications and enables service providers to offer VDI from a cloud-based solution. "It gives the ability to securely perform multi-tenancy, which enables partners to sell the solution as their own. When a partner comes on board, we'll brand the solution as theirs," Ben explained.

As Hosted Network was developing its new Horizon DaaS solution, it knew the storage used for its existing Infrastructure as a Service offering could not scale or meet its VDI performance needs. The hunt was then on for storage that could handle very large VDI session-based workloads.

"Pushing forward into more of a VDI environment, the I/O requirements are staggering. Our disk-based arrays and even our hybrid arrays just weren't going to cut it," Ben said. "Every single client we have is doing something slightly different. We needed something that could cope with the variable I/O."

The inability to scale its storage quickly and easily was also an acute pain point

for Hosted Network. "We were adding in new storage and it was lasting around two months before hitting its capacities," Ben said. "It's not cost-effective to go with that, particularly where we're at the beginning of a ramp period, so when we're peaking, we wouldn't have been able to keep up at all."

Lastly, Hosted Network wanted easier management of its storage. "We didn't want something we were having to manage at a ridiculous level, something that was overly complicated to run," Ben said. "We can automate a lot of the requirements so that our running cost is lower and our staff can worry about supporting the end user."

SolidFire enables high-performance DaaS

Hosted Network was considering a variety of new storage options for its DaaS offering: HDD-based, hybrid arrays, and all-flash arrays. They had first become aware of SolidFire through another Australia-based service provider that had deployed SolidFire.

"We had ruled out a lot of the larger sort of storage providers," Ben said. "We wanted to work with a 'storage 2.0' sort of vendor."

Predictable performance and reliability for all desktops

Because of its white-label approach to VDI, reliability is particularly critical to Hosted Network. With a shared-nothing, RAID-less architecture coupled with QoS, SolidFire enables Hosted Network to maintain predictable performance no matter the system condition.

"With SolidFire, we know we've got the reliability to lose an entire node and still be up and running," Ben said. "We can rest knowing that we've got that sort of reliability."

Granular scalability to match growth

As Hosted Network grows its own business, it wanted a storage system that could easily grow with it. SolidFire's scale-out design enabled Hosted Network to add infrastructure granularly as its business needs dictate.

"No one else is offering that sort of scale-out approach that SolidFire is," Ben said. "We need something that we can easily grow with. Our approach is to add more compute and then add more storage. Unlike a lot of the other vendors where we have to fork out a huge amount up

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front, we're able to grow node by node with SolidFire. We can go to market with leading storage, leading compute, and still have money left over for our marketing campaigns and things that grow our business as well."

"We were looking for someone that we can grow our business with. That's something SolidFire is doing. We're not just after a storage array, we're after a relationship."

Ben Town
Hosted Network Managing Director

Automated management enables new services

In addition to its white-label VDI offering, Hosted Network also provides other services, such as Internet connectivity. SolidFire's REST-based API enables Hosted Network to make desktop provisioning self-service. As Ben elaborated, "Our provisioning for new desktops with a new bandwidth solution is all web-based, so down the line the SolidFire API will

tie into all of that so we can allow our partners to spin things up on the fly."

Hosted Network moved to a VMware-based VDI platform, due in large part to how much less complicated Horizon is compared with Hosted Network's previous solution. SolidFire makes it easier still with automation support and integration with VMware.

"From provisioning desktops to joining the domain to deploying the scripts that we need, it's all automated," Ben said. "When a new tenant comes on board, we'll automatically provision the storage and the matching I/O requirements for the number of tenants or the number of desktops they're running."

SolidFire's vStorage APIs for Array Integration (VAAI) support helped speed up desktop provisioning. "We can quickly provision desktops and clone them over and over again, because we can use XCopy," Ben said.

Data reduction reduces footprint, lowers TCO

Another reason Hosted Network chose SolidFire is always-on, in-line deduplication. Because it utilizes many cloned desktops, Hosted Network's dataset is well suited to deduplication, providing significant data reduction.

"Dedupe is probably the number one reason we went with an all-flash array," Ben said. "There's no point having a full copy of cloned databases over and over and over again. The deduplication features of SolidFire lowers our footprint of a tenant quite significantly."

Overall, Hosted Network is pleased with its purchase of SolidFire and optimistic about its DaaS offering and growth ahead. "We were looking for someone that we can grow our business with. That's something SolidFire is doing," Ben said. "We're not just after a storage array, we're after a relationship."

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