Nominee: Xtravirt

Nomination title: Xtravirt keeps the business running as data centres across Europe are consolidated and centralised

Xtravirt is a provider of virtualisation solutions with a focus on market leading products and knowledge leading services. Xtravirt operates throughout the UK and Europe, delivering data centre, workspace and cloud solutions to our customers across public and private sectors.

Founded in 2005, we originally provided online tools and a knowledge base that led to us having over 50,000 subscribers today. As our expertise in virtualisation grew, along with our reputation, so did the demand for our knowledge, not only via our knowledge base, but also for our consultancy services. This demand led to the creation of our consultancy practice in 2007, at which time we had just 5 consultants compared to over 30 today, operating throughout the UK and Europe, and our global subscriber base continues to grow.

We most recently deployed VMware and Citrix into Avis Budget Group (ABG EMEA), a leading global provider of vehicle rental services. We consolidated 10 data centres holding 30 tb of data across 17 EMEA countries, down to dual data centres in the UK, and deployed a 4,000 user virtual desktop environment for them. The project was a strategic initiative for the organisation and the Xtravirt team worked alongside the in-house IT team to deliver a highly complex project on time and under budget.

The autonomous nature of country-based IT teams and business units had led to a plethora of data centres and infrastructure standards across ABG's European hubs. This had increased the costs of running and supporting the IT infrastructure and had added complications to the planned introduction of Europe-wide business initiatives and requisite compliance standards. Country systems, siloed by local language, business practice and diverse standards, all needed to be consolidated and migrated to a purpose built facility in the UK. Not uncommonly this all had to be achieved to an aggressive timescale of less than 16 months, with minimal impact on the daily operations of the business.

A critical factor in successfully migrating data centre workloads between locations is to have a thorough and well-documented understanding of the infrastructure and the associated applications and business processes to be migrated.

Xtravirt deployed its proven migration method to capture these key dimensions of the environments. Xtravirt utilised its Passport framework, which provides a structured approach to ensure source environments are successfully transitioned to new target environments.

This method includes:

- Capturing the physical environment metrics such as server, memory and storage size and usage
- Documenting the application landscape, impacted business processes and users and the interfaces to internal and external parties
- Detailed analysis to correctly size target platforms and the selection of appropriate migration methods, processes and tools

Working closely with ABG's country IT teams, a detailed plan plotted the sequencing of country consolidations, staging and migration activities. This identified the ability to parallelise a number of key activities that ensured timescales could be met without increasing the risk of business downtime. Transition activities including staging, consolidation activities and the migration events were scheduled to minimise business downtime and any potential impact on customer service.

The key results of the engagement include:

- Ten-fold improvement in server utilisation with the ability to rapidly provision new machines at short notice
- Improved network communications and commonality of network components
- Single consolidated backup and archive solution replacing a multitude of disparate systems and processes
- Consolidated licencing policy across the new infrastructure, reducing costs and ensuring compliance
- Significant reduction in operational support and maintenance costs

Furthermore, the customer has told us – in confidence - that this project has saved them over £1 million to date.

We work with the leading providers of virtualisation technologies, including VMware, Citrix, Microsoft, EMC and Atlantis Computing. As Ed Dolman, Channel Manager UK & Ireland at VMware, states, "We have worked with the team at Xtravirt for a number of years. They are one of our key go-to partners for VMware professional services, as well one of 12 EUC (end-user computing) partners - as reported in CRN."

Xtravirt are a VMware Enterprise Partner with competencies in VMware Desktop Virtualisation, Virtualisation Management, Infrastructure Virtualization, Cloud Infrastructure as a Service and Hybrid Cloud. We were also awarded the VMware Consulting Partner of the Year Award in 2011.

We also partner with Microsoft and have achieved Gold level for Management and Virtualisation and Silver for Midmarket Solution Provider and Server Platform. And we are also a Silver level solutions partner with Citrix.

We have over 400 technical accreditations in total including:

- 151 Microsoft Professional accreditations
- 274 VMware Professional accreditations and 6 VMware vExperts
- 57 Citrix Professional accreditations
- AWS – 6 business & technical professionals

Why nominee should win

- We have a strong track record and reputation for delivering integrated solutions to enterprise level customers around data centre virtualisation, in addition to workspace virtualisation and cloud solutions.
- We hold strategic partnerships with leading vendors and providers of virtualisation technologies, who also readily utilise our professional services for their own customers' projects.
- We are a truly agnostic reseller and service provider, dedicated to always meeting our clients' and partners' requirements by impartially selecting the best technologies to address each customer's business requirements.
- We invest continuously in improving and developing processes, frameworks and methodologies specifically for the needs of virtualisation.