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Healthbridge Modernises Datacentre and Enhances Storage and Operational Efficiencies

South Africa's largest medical transaction switch, Healthbridge, improves customer response times and saves on costly upgrades with switch to a hyperconverged infrastructure

Management of information in the healthcare industry is not just complex, but when performed manually can be downright impossible. It is an information-intensive industry whose moving parts are made up of an intricate web of engagements, transactions and partnerships between patients, medical professionals, medical aids, healthcare institutions and stakeholders. One missing link in the flow of information can unearth huge discrepancies. That is until Healthbridge, launched in 1999 with the aim to provide technology solutions that automate and streamline the claims and management tasks of a medical practice, pioneered real-time claim processing in South Africa.

Today Healthbridge is the primary digital link for the industry, setting the standard in transactional and engagement switching of information between medical professionals, patients, medical aids and healthcare stakeholders. It offers a myriad of cloud-based solutions for its clients, not least of which are its billing, revenue-cycle management, claims reporting and benefits checker.

IMPROVEMENTS WHEN UPGRADING

An ever-evolving business that relies on innovation and is constantly looking to improve the delivery of its services for healthcare clients, Healthbridge decided that, in order to embrace digitalisation and simplify IT operations, a change was needed.

CLIENT
Healthbridge
www.healthbridge.co.za

INDUSTRY
Health technology

BUSINESS NEEDS
- Reduced upgrade costs from millions
- Improved latency and speed to services
- Fewer customer complaints

SOLUTION
Nutanix HCI on HPE ProLiant DX Servers

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"In our world, we have close to 300 servers with plans for more. Replacing or upgrading these with physical hardware is not an option, so we needed to follow the route of virtual servers," said Andre de Lange, IT operations manager at Healthbridge. Upgrading or expanding our existing environment was extremely painful and we faced issues with regards to performance and storage capacity. We wanted a system that was easy to scale, not too expensive, and that was a perfect fit for our dynamic business."

Complexity was also biting at the heels of Healthbridge and its IT team - having to log into every server if there was a perceived problem is a manual task the team would rather forego. The requirement? One place to log in, one dashboard, a single pane of glass and one version of the truth of where its systems are at any given point.

"Because of the nature of what we do and the sensitivity of the data we handle, reliable and secure software and hardware are essential. We cannot contravene any regulations or risk an information/data leak with regards to a patient. It's a non-negotiable that we simply can't risk," added De Lange.

MAKING THE SWITCH

No detail is too small when it comes to costs and this was a big motivator when it came to investigating an upgrade path. According to De Lange, it was going to cost half a million rand to perform a basic upgrade, while a full upgrade would run well over R10 million. But the company was running out of storage, and latency issues were having a domino effect on the customer experience.

"Complaints were coming in daily around the speed of both transactions and the websites from which our clients log into our systems. Our industry relies on split second responses; when a doctor or a healthcare provider clicks a button they want immediate results. Our users are very much report driven, pulling details on billing and statistics daily, not just on a monthly basis."

The path to the new system was based on the internal evaluation of a Nutanix HPE system compared to a replacement of its SQL environment. The primary decider for Healthbridge was pinned on the 15-year long relationship it has with Datacentrix, a Nutanix Scaler Partner and an HPE Platinum Partner, where De Lange said he was never in doubt that the team would provide him a solution best fit for his business – not that best fit their sales efforts.

OUT WITH THE OLD

After demonstrating the results, a Nutanix solution on HPE ProLiant DX Servers would proffer, De Lange added that he initially thought it was just too good to be true.

"I was a huge sceptic that this simplified hyperconverged environment on SSD drives would provide me with the performance that I required. After Datacentrix completed the implementation of the Nutanix hyperconverged solution I was massively impressed. One of our flagship systems was run on an exceptionally high performing machine, but we took the leap, moved it over to Nutanix and now we are getting better performance than we were on the other system – again hugely impressed," said De Lange.

Benefits of the move are not just weighted by improved scalability and an increase in performance, but more importantly cost effectiveness. After consulting with Healthbridge's CFO, De Lange said the management team agreed that, while the ultimate decision rested with IT, it would make no sense financially to spend R15m to replace the old environment.

Using the native AHV virtualisation software on the HPE environment has also extended the systems upgrade cycle for Healthbridge from between 12 and 18-months to 24 months. The ease of use and maintenance also means that its internal Nutanix resource was able to upskill quickly and no longer has to call on an external resource with simple change requests.

CUSTOMER SATISFACTION

"The complaints we were receiving every day came to an immediate stop the moment we deployed the Nutanix environment. That to me is positive feedback. The doctors and people who work for them don't hesitate to pick up a phone or send an email to complain – no calls or emails means no complaints – speaking volumes to the systems performance.

"If there is something wrong people will complain. If they don't complain there is nothing wrong. So you must always view the lack of complaints as a benefit and testimony to the fact that your system is doing what it needs to," concluded De Lange.

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