

IS YOUR BUSINESS CONSIDERING PRIVATE CLOUD STRATEGIES TO CREATE ADDITIONAL OPPORTUNITIES – AND PROFITABILITY?

This Private Cloud provider did just that with Vblock.

ESSENTIALS

Company Cobweb, Hampshire, England

Industry Cloud Service Provider

Solution

- Vblock 1.0
- 2 x CX4 480
- UltraPoint DAE
- Vsphere

Key benefits

- Exceptional ROI
- Scales up from 50K to 300K MS Exchange seats
- Facilitates Private Cloud, SaaS, and IaaS offerings
- Offers opportunities for entrepreneurial vision and execution
- Flexible, reliable, scalable
- Up to 10 VMs on 1 physical server
- Lowers costs through increased efficiency, productivity
- Backed by a Cloud Vision and partnership from EMC, VMware and Cisco (VCE)

BUSINESS OVERVIEW

Based in Hampshire, England, Cobweb Solutions Ltd is one of Europe's leading Cloud Service Providers. Its offerings of IaaS (Infrastructure as a service) and SaaS (Software as a service) to Enterprise and SME businesses has fueled exceptional growth.

About four years ago, Cobweb examined Virtualization as a method of enhancing its IT infrastructure in order to increase profitability, improve its competitive position, quickly meet customer demands, and position it for additional growth.

Subsequent discussions with EMC led Cobweb management to choose Vblock – developed by a joint partnership of EMC, VMware, and Cisco (VCE) – as its core IT platform. In doing so, Cobweb became the first company in Europe to adopt this unique integrated IT offering.

Here, we see how Vblock has positioned Cobweb (www.cobwebcloud.com) to leverage additional opportunities within the Private Cloud arena.

THE CHALLENGE: DRIVEN BY DEMAND

Paul Hannam, Cobweb CEO, explains how the company became Europe's first Vblock customer. "We started looking at virtualization four to five years ago. It made sense because of our strategic move into Private Cloud and SaaS offerings including Microsoft Exchange.

"Many business customers of all sizes no longer want to be bothered with a search for the latest IT application or infrastructure solution. They don't want the Capex costs, nor do some of them have the internal resources to stay abreast of changing technologies, to finance infrastructure, or to go through the time-consuming chore of infrastructure and application deployment and testing. Instead they want to stay focused on their own core businesses. This focus has provided Cobweb with many opportunities within the Private Cloud environment."

Cobweb has experienced exponential growth due to its IaaS and SaaS strategies. It now offers services to over 5,500 companies and provides over 55,000 Microsoft Exchange mailboxes on a SaaS basis. "Because our data and VM requirements were growing so quickly, we knew that we needed to consolidate both our data and test environments. We also required a method for quick deployment, a capability that allowed for huge infrastructure flexibility and scalability, delivery mechanisms that were guaranteed and that would meet our customers' needs, as well as infrastructure that would facilitate how they bought our services," Hannam explains.

"We looked at a number of providers including HP. We chose Vblock due to many factors including its technical performance. Vblock, which incorporates EMC storage capabilities, Cisco infrastructure, and VMware Vsphere – allows more VMs per Pound Sterling spent by us

than any other competitor. In fact, and on test, we have exceeded 10 virtualized servers to 1 physical server, an exceptional result. Vblock is a very a cost-effective integrated solution.”

A STRATEGIC VISION TO FUEL THE FUTURE

Cobweb CTO Julian Dyer explains how the vision of EMC, as well as Vblock partners VMware and Cisco, motivated them to purchase Vblock. “We were introduced to Vblock by MTI, our IT solutions provider. We were being pushed by our customers to grow our infrastructure even further. Initially, we considered using Vblock as an infrastructure solution to expand our Enterprise offerings. But by the time we did our analysis we decided to make Vblock our core platform.”

“... the implementation of Vblock has resulted in a good return on investment. ...the amount of money that we generate has resulted in the highest ROI in our data center. Vblock allows us to compete effectively with the big boys out there, like Google, despite the fact that we’re a small company.”

PAUL HANNAM, CEO, COBWEB

Dyer explains that Cobweb conducted a Capex analysis of HP versus Vblock. “We went with Vblock because it won out on return on investment. But there were other reasons.”

In a conversation with Chad Sakac, EMC’s VP for the VMware Technology Alliance, Cobweb realized that they were talking with people whose vision of the future paralleled their own. “Chad’s (and EMC’s) vision aligned with our own. He talked about the future of Hyper Clouds, and how EMC and its partners were providing infrastructure to leverage those opportunities. He talked about EMC as a true partner. We knew that by purchasing Vblock we had the opportunity to get a known building block of infrastructure, plus an interesting partnership with VCE.

“At the end of the day our infrastructure has to be right and deliver to our customers as promised. Vblock is a best of breed integrated technology effort from some great partners. That was the final and most important differentiator between them and the competition.”

IMPLEMENTING A FUTURE OF CLOUD

Cobweb purchased and rolled out Vblock 1.0. It customized that infrastructure with the addition of two additional SANs (EMC CLARiiON CX4 480s). Data storage was enhanced with the addition of UltraPoint Disk-Array Enclosures (DAE). Cobweb changed the memory configuration to 64 Gig as standard, with full, standardized fibre channel, while adding 7,000 additional switches to achieve full ISP data center capabilities.

The results are impressive: “We can scale up from 50,000 MS Exchange seats to over 300,000 seats with this existing architecture,” Dyer states. “Our data storage capability has moved up to a Petabyte, and that only includes slow storage, not our FAST capability. We have the ability to quickly roll out thousands of VMs for specific customer requirements or applications.

“As importantly is the fact that this solution is reliable and repeatable. We are confident in it. Our IT team can configure at 2AM and know that it will be working when it’s needed. That confidence is backed up by a roadmap delivered to us by EMC and its partners, with a proof of performance that is exceptional.”

“EMC and its partners offered us a solution that enables the company – as well as its many customers – to cope with change. We can build out in a manner that is repeatable and that minimizes costs. Vblock just works – our customers won’t have to call us. Applications including our billing system are easily integrated. We’re also building layers of automation

on top of this infrastructure in order to minimize human input, and achieve even greater levels of accuracy, efficiency, and cost effectiveness.”

ROI AS A BENCHMARK

CEO Paul Hannam sums up why Cobweb is so satisfied with Vblock. “We’ve had a long relationship with EMC and they understand our business model. Cobweb is a specialist company, yet EMC and its partners in Vblock took the time to understand our own vision, our needs, and our customers’ requirements.

“We’re very satisfied with Vblock and for a number of reasons. First, we’re able to offer our customers a true Cloud Service as well as hybrid models. Some enterprise customers want to keep part of their IT infrastructure and applications in their own premises, while contracting for other capabilities with us. Vblock helps us to offer that.

“Second: security and compliance. That’s very high up on customers’ agendas when considering Cloud offerings. With other companies such as Amazon, customers might not know where their data is sitting. But when dealing with Cobweb, we can assure them that their data is sitting on our Vblock, on this standardized solution. That confidence allows our customers to meet their own security and compliance standards by de-risking monitoring, reporting and security requirements.

“Third, the implementation of Vblock has resulted in a massive return on investment. By layering applications onto Vblock, the amount of money that we generate has resulted in the highest ROI in our data center. It has provided us with fully virtualized infrastructure that’s delivering SaaS to thousands of users and thousands of companies – what an amazing return on investment!

“Vblock allows us to compete effectively with the big boys out there, like Google, despite the fact that we’re a small company with only 80 employees. Vblock infrastructure enables Cobweb to grow, profit, and achieve a level of personal delivery that our customers find extremely exciting and which differentiates us from our competition.”

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