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| Microsoft Desktop Optimization Pack  Customer Solution Case Study |
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|  |  |  | Corp HeaderHosting Provider Improves Responsiveness, Extends Offerings with Virtualization |
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| Overview  **Country or Region:** United States and the Netherlands  **Industry:** IT services  Customer Profile  SaaSplaza provides software-as-a-service offerings to resellers, who sell them to companies in the United States and Europe. It has about 65 employees.  Business Situation  SaaSplaza wanted to eliminate the application compatibility and management complexity issues that affected its Microsoft Dynamics NAV services.  Solution  SaaSplaza chose Microsoft Application Virtualization to virtualize Microsoft Dynamics NAV on its Remote Desktop Services environment and stream virtual Microsoft Dynamics NAV clients direct to customer computers.  Benefits   * Reduces application testing time by 80 percent, improves sales team responsiveness * Consolidates servers by 25 percent, saves money * Eases management * Improves customer experience, partner satisfaction |  |  | “Using App-V has profoundly changed our business. We have tremendous flexibility and control over our Microsoft Dynamics NAV environments and can provide better service to partners and their customers.”  Olivier Bourgeot, Senior Architect, SaaSplaza |
|  |  | SaaSplaza offers hosted Microsoft Dynamics services that are sold by reseller partners. To facilitate growth, it needed to address application delivery and management challenges that were affecting Microsoft Dynamics NAV running on the Remote Desktop Services environment and a planned desktop computer offering. By using Microsoft Application Virtualization to virtualize Microsoft Dynamics NAV, SaaSplaza reduces application testing time by 80 percent, enabling its sales team to be more responsive to partner requests. The company is consolidating its server computers by 25 percent, making management easier and saving money. Moreover, it can offer a new service comprising virtual Microsoft Dynamics NAV clients that are streamed to customer computers, making it simple for customers to use Microsoft Dynamics NAV with Microsoft Office and more cost-effective for them to use the product. |
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Situation

SaaSplaza provides software-as-a-service (SaaS) offerings to resellers through its Amstelveen, Netherlands–based headquarters and its office in San Diego, California. Founded in 2008, the company realized revenues of U.S.$11 million in 2009, while its partners generated more than U.S.$100 million from SaaSplaza offerings.

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Its success is based on providing highly reliable, responsive, and cost-effective services—and hosting applications that are sold by a large reseller community and used by an extensive customer base. To that end, SaaSplaza began offering Microsoft Dynamics business management solutions in 2008. Today Microsoft Dynamics forms the crux of the company’s business. SaaSplaza works with more than 100 Microsoft Dynamics resellers and about 50 primarily Microsoft independent software vendors, supporting approximately one million users in more than 50 countries.

“Our business really began taking off after we started focusing on Microsoft Dynamics. To facilitate continued growth, we needed to address challenges that we faced in the support and scaling of our services,” says Olivier Bourgeot, Senior Architect at SaaSplaza.

SaaSplaza runs Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2009, as well as third-party applications that work with the solution, in its Remote Desktop Services (RDS) environment. “This type of infrastructure enables us to use shared server resources for different partner projects so that we can simplify management and contain costs,” Bourgeot notes.

Application Conflict Testing Affected Sales Team and Partners

To ensure that applications wouldn’t conflict when installed on the same server, SaaSplaza employees had to spend time testing the applications for compatibility. “Testing was critical. Our partners depend on our ability to support the full Microsoft Dynamics NAV ecosystem. We had to make sure that, when they asked us to add another application for a customer, it wasn’t going to introduce risk and jeopardize the environment’s stability,” says Bourgeot. Because SaaSplaza could not dedicate staff to testing applications, it typically took a week to complete each test.

If the applications were not compatible, then SaaSplaza would need to install them in dedicated environments on separate silos, which required more server computers and more time to manage.

“The long testing time affected our ability to respond to partners who wanted to add third-party applications to their Microsoft Dynamics NAV offering,” Bourgeot says. “Our salespeople want to respond to partner requests for quotes right away, but they had to wait until we could determine whether the applications could run without conflicting, or whether we’d have to spend more—and perhaps charge more—to build our environment in order to support their needs.”

The delay had implications on partner relationships. “Our partners couldn’t respond to their own customer requests for expanded solutions until they received a response from SaaSplaza. It was frustrating for everyone involved,” says Bourgeot.

The challenge with application conflicts became more pronounced when Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2009 Service Pack 1 was released in August 2009. SaaSplaza partners wanted to offer the upgraded product to new customers, but many existing customers still wanted to use the earlier version. To accommodate this, SaaSplaza had to create a separate environment for Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2009 Service Pack 1. As with any software program, different versions of the same application cannot coexist on the same shared environment without conflicting.

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In addition, because SaaSplaza continued to sign on partners and had to support more third-party applications and expanded customer environments, its server farm continued growing, as did the complexity of its environment and the challenge of having enough time and resources to manage it.

Desire to Enhance Offerings with Desktop Solution

As its Microsoft Dynamics NAV business grew, SaaSplaza realized there was an opportunity to broaden its offering for different use cases. “RDS is great for forms-based applications, while scenarios that require more graphic-intensive data are better served with desktop computing solutions,” says Bourgeot.

SaaSplaza faced issues using Microsoft Dynamics NAV data on the server with Microsoft Office products that are installed on computers that its partners’ customers used. According to Bourgeot, “Some people wanted to export data from Microsoft Dynamics NAV into Microsoft Office. We needed a way to integrate hosted applications that are delivered by RDS with local desktop computer environments.”

Creating a work-around solution would be costly. “You could get around the integration issue by running Microsoft Office on the RDS server along with Microsoft Dynamics NAV. But that would require customers paying for a RDS license for Office. Because they already had Office on their local computers, they weren’t keen about paying for another license to facilitate the integration,” says Bourgeot.

SaaSplaza knew that provisioning a Microsoft Dynamics NAV client directly on customer computers would help resolve these issues and, in line with the company’s commitment to continually enhance its SaaS platform and offerings, it decided to speak with Microsoft about how to enable this type of solution. In November 2009, SaaSplaza, a member of the Microsoft Partner Network, met with the Microsoft Dynamics NAV development team at the Microsoft Directions 2009 conference.

“We worked closely with the Microsoft team on product requirements that would help us deliver Microsoft Dynamics NAV clients over the web,” says Bourgeot. “However, we knew there was an element of risk to this approach. Namely, we could lose the ability to control the users’ experience because part of the solution would be installed on computers at the customer site rather than on SaaSplaza servers. We were concerned that installing the client component on customer devices would lead to complications. We’d have to work with the customers’ IT departments to make sure their desktop environments could support the Microsoft Dynamics NAV client and we’d run the risk of the application conflicting with software programs that were installed on the customers’ computers.”

SaaSplaza needed to resolve the challenges with its existing RDS environment and the pending desktop computer solution. “We had to find a way to more quickly and easily provision applications and ensure they wouldn’t conflict, while simplifying management and minimizing costs,” says Bourgeot.

Solution

SaaSplaza was familiar with application virtualization technology and believed that it could help address its application deployment and management issues. It decided to choose Microsoft Application Virtualization (App-V) and the Microsoft Services Provider License Agreement. “App-V provided the robust functionality we needed and, with Microsoft expanding the Services Provider License Agreement for App-V to include provisioning of Microsoft Dynamics NAV, the timing was right,” says Bourgeot.

App-V transforms traditional applications into virtualized, network-available services by separating the application’s dependencies from the computer. The application can be streamed on-demand to the target computer, where it runs on the local cache without actually being installed on the operating system. This helps to eliminate the application conflicts and lengthy compatibility testing that are typical with traditional software installations and it simplifies application delivery.

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SaaSplaza began testing Microsoft Application Virtualization for Remote Desktop Services in July 2010, virtualizing Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2009 Service Pack 1. The company created a demonstration environment and showcased the virtualized solution running on its RDS environment with key reseller partners.

In November 2010, SaaSplaza started testing App-V in desktop computer scenarios. “We used App-V to virtualize the Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2009 R2 release candidate so that it could be run on customers’ computers. We wanted to use the R2 product because it is optimized for provisioning the Microsoft Dynamics NAV client over the web,” explains Bourgeot.

SaaSplaza asked a select group of companies that were using its existing, traditionally installed Microsoft Dynamics NAV solution in its RDS environment to participate in the desktop pilot project. This would enable SaaSplaza to compare the user experience for both types of implementations. In addition to these customers—each of which assigned a small group of employees to evaluate virtual Microsoft Dynamics NAV running on their own computers—SaaSplaza included about 50 partners in the pilot. “Early feedback has been very favorable. Customers like the ease of use and seamlessness of the virtual Microsoft Dynamics NAV desktop solution,” says Bourgeot. “In fact, when Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2009 R2 became publicly available and we switched users from the release candidate, they didn’t even notice. There was no interruption at all. We just streamed the new package and the users began working with it the next time they logged on to their computers. We expect that when we begin rolling it out in production, the positive responses will be even greater.”

SaaSplaza plans to begin using virtualized Microsoft Dynamics NAV in production in both its RDS environment and the new desktop computer offering in February 2011.

Virtualization is becoming a core part of the SaaSplaza architecture. The company also uses server virtualization to make it easier to deploy and manage server resources for its growing customer base. SaaSplaza plans to standardize on Windows Server 2008 R2 Enterprise with Hyper-V virtualization technology. As of January 2011, it had deployed about 30 Hyper-V virtual machines.

Benefits

By using Microsoft Application Virtualization to virtualize Microsoft Dynamics NAV, SaaSplaza drastically cuts testing time and enables its sales team to be more responsive to partner requests. The company needs fewer computers in its Remote Desktop Services environment, saving money and simplifying management. And it can offer a new desktop service that makes using Microsoft Dynamics NAV easier and more cost-effective for customers.

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“Using App-V has profoundly changed our business. We have tremendous flexibility and control over our Microsoft Dynamics NAV environment and can provide better service to partners and their customers,” says Bourgeot.

Reduces Application Testing Time by 80 Percent, Improves Sales Team Responsiveness

Introducing third-party software into the environment is much easier and faster. Because virtual applications do not conflict with any other applications, SaaSplaza does not have to spend time on extensive compatibility testing for third-party applications. “Instead of taking five days to complete testing, it takes less than one day to package a virtual application using App-V and test it in our environment,” Bourgeot says.

The impact on the SaaSplaza sales team is significant. “Using App-V makes a huge difference for our salespeople. We remove the IT bottleneck that dragged out the quoting process. Now we can respond to partner requests for new projects within a day instead of having to wait a week,” says Bourgeot.

Consolidates Servers by 25 Percent, Saves Money

By using App-V for Remote Desktop Services, SaaSplaza can run applications side by side without worrying about compatibility and without having to create silos to separate conflicting applications. The company can run multiple versions of the same application—namely, Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2009 SP1 and Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2009 R2—on the same computer. Now SaaSplaza can support customers who require different versions of Microsoft Dynamics NAV with shared server resources.

“Our business is growing steadily and, to support that growth, we naturally have to expand our server farm. However, by using App-V, we can consolidate our servers and minimize the number of new computers we need. Without App-V, we would have to purchase about 25 percent more server computers,” Bourgeot says.

This translates into monetary savings. According to Bourgeot, “By not having to buy so many additional servers, we will save not only hardware costs but also related licensing costs for software such as antivirus.”

Eases Management

The SaaSplaza Remote Desktop Services infrastructure is easier to manage. “We’ve reduced the complexity by minimizing the number of silos and computers. And because the environment isn’t exposed to application conflict–related issues, we don’t have to spend so much time troubleshooting. All of this makes our infrastructure much easier to support and enables us to spend about 30 percent less time maintaining it,” Bourgeot says.

SaaSplaza also has the level of management it needs over the Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2009 desktop solution. According to Bourgeot, “If we didn’t virtualize the Microsoft Dynamics NAV client, not only would we not be able to manage its effect on the customers’ computers—which could have far-reaching consequences in terms of application conflicts and system crashes—we wouldn’t be able to easily provision applications to the customer. Now we can stream the applications on-demand, knowing they won’t cause any problems for our partners’ customers.”

Improves Customer Experience, Partner Satisfaction

SaaSplaza partners—and their customers—benefit from the company’s use of App-V. For instance, introducing new applications into the Remote Desktop Services farm no longer puts the infrastructure at risk. “By using App-V, we can ensure a highly reliable environment and that’s key to our business. We couldn’t attract partners without providing a stable environment that their customers can depend on around the clock,” Bourgeot notes.

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| “Now enterprises can easily use Microsoft Dynamics NAV with Microsoft Office on their employees’ computers.”  Olivier Bourgeot, Senior Architect, SaaSplaza |

SaaSplaza also enhances the customer experience by using App-V to stream virtual Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2009 R2 clients directly to customer desktop computers. “Now enterprises can easily use Microsoft Dynamics NAV with Microsoft Office on their employees’ computers. And because there is no risk of the virtual Microsoft Dynamics NAV client conflicting with other applications, the customers’ help desks don’t have to worry about being burdened by extra work,” Bourgeot explains.

Customers that use the SaaSplaza desktop computer solution can also save money. “By being able to run a virtual Microsoft Dynamics NAV client directly on customer computers, we reduce the costs that they incur,” says Bourgeot. “Customers avoid having to spend money on a Microsoft Dynamics NAV and Microsoft Office integration workaround because they don’t have to license Office to run in our Remote Desktop Services environment. And because the Microsoft Dynamics NAV client runs on customer computers instead of SaaSplaza servers, customers don’t have to pay for a Remote Desktop Services license for the client.“

SaaSplaza notes that customers often want to enhance their SaaSplaza Microsoft Dynamics NAV environment with upgrades or new third-party products. “It makes our partners happy to know that, by using App-V to virtualize these applications and eliminate the chance of conflicts, we can easily accommodate their customers’ requests for new services,” says Bourgeot. “And because we can turn around quotes faster, our partners can be much more responsive to their customers’ inquiries as well.”

Microsoft Desktop Optimization

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| Software and Services   * Microsoft Desktop Optimization Pack * Microsoft Application Virtualization * Microsoft Dynamics * Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2009 R2 * Microsoft Dynamics NAV 2009 SP1 | * Microsoft Server Product Portfolio * Windows Server 2008 R2 Enterprise * Technologies * Hyper-V |

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For more information about SaaSplaza products and services, call (31) 20 547 8060 or (858) 385 8900 or visit the website at:  
[www.saasplaza.com](http://www.saasplaza.com)

Microsoft Desktop Optimization Pack (MDOP) for Software Assurance makes it easy for an organization to administer its applications, offering tools for virtualizing and inventorying software installations, for managing Group Policy settings, and for system repair and data recovery.

For more information about MDOP, go to:

[www.microsoft.com/mdop](http://www.microsoft.com/mdop)

Microsoft Dynamics NAV

Microsoft Dynamics NAV is an ERP solution for midsized companies that helps them simplify and streamline specialized business processes, rapidly adapting to their unique way of doing business.

For more information about Microsoft Dynamics NAV, go to:

[www.microsoft.com/dynamics](http://www.microsoft.com/dynamics)