

Flour Mills of Nigeria overhauls IT infrastructure with Nutanix for significant business improvements

Replacing its legacy servers and systems, Flour Mills of Nigeria has modernised its IT environment with more agile and innovative Nutanix technology

Flour Mills of Nigeria (FMN), one of the largest single-site mills in the world, has partnered with Nutanix to refresh its ageing legacy IT infrastructure with Nutanix solutions and improve its operational efficiencies. With the resultant benefits, FMN has been able to triple the company profits in the financial year following the implementation.

Making this even more significant is that the project was completed remotely given the lockdown conditions in the country due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The high availability of the Nutanix environment now provides the organisation with the peace of mind required to remain focused on its strategic deliverables instead of spending significant resources conducting unnecessary IT administration.

CUSTOMER

Incorporated in 1960, FMN specialises in the production of flour. Its milling complex in Apapa has a rated grinding capacity of 8 000 metric tons per day, making it one of the largest single mill sites in the world.

Running a centralised IT environment, the FMN Group consists of three divisions - Foods; Agro-Allied; and Logistics and Support. This publicly-traded company aims to be the leading food and agro-allied group in Africa and strives to produce and supply products of superior quality and value to the market.

COMPANY

Flour Mills of Nigeria

INDUSTRY

Agriculture

BUSINESS NEEDS

Replace legacy IT environment to improve operational efficiencies.

SOLUTION

Nutanix NX-3060-G6 Appliances, Nutanix AHV

BENEFITS

Eliminate IT downtime, user-friendly administration, improved energy efficiencies, delivering business growth opportunities, increased company revenue.

INFRASTRUCTURAL LIMITATIONS REACH BREAKING POINT

Even though FMN replaced several of its servers in 2011, the IT infrastructure in its entirety was outdated. This resulted in skyrocketing maintenance costs and made effective administration difficult. Furthermore, replacement parts were not available for the servers leading to a situation where the company could not run major maintenance in case something would be irreparably damaged. It became a massive business risk and resulted in a loss of potential revenue for the organisation.

IT engaged with several key original equipment manufacturers (OEMs) and spent several months investigating the various options available to the business. However, in terms of network topology, technology, and cost, it decided to partner with Nutanix.

“Nutanix was not limited by any technical constraints and provided us with solutions that made not only the implementation easy but offered user-friendly administration. This meant that any person in our team would be able to manage the IT environment effectively. The cost value proposition was also a significant deciding factor for FMN. Nutanix was almost 40% cheaper than its nearest competitor,” says Ajibade Daramola, Head of Infrastructure at FMN.

SOLUTION

Following a comprehensive assessment, FMN decided to implement the Nutanix NX-3060 G7 virtual computing platform appliances running Nutanix’s leading HCI software. They also chose AHV as their secure, enterprise-grade virtualisation solution. IT currently has four nodes in production and three running its DR supporting approximately 3000 users in the environment.

Initially, FMN migrated its core business applications, including the Microsoft Dynamix AX 2012 enterprise resource planning solution to the Nutanix stack. The entire implementation was done via Nutanix Xpert Services that delivered a full suite of offerings to maximise the value of its investment in the technology.

“Being able to implement the entire infrastructure remotely and still conduct the migration highlights the simplicity of the Nutanix offering. We are planning to certify our employees in the future on Nutanix to further enhance the new environment we have in place. However, one of our IT specialists has already been provisioning new servers and managing the entire infrastructure on his own such is the user-friendliness Nutanix provides,” adds Daramola.

BENEFITS

After FMN went live on Nutanix, the organisation surveyed its employees to get their feedback on the application performance of the environment. The feedback was highly encouraging with everybody unanimously agreeing that Nutanix has delivered tremendous improvements to the IT systems.

“Some of our resource-intensive tasks took eight hours to complete on the legacy systems. With Nutanix, that has been reduced to 20 minutes. This now enables us to re-examine our hardware footprint and conduct a significant asset disposal exercise where we will retire the old solutions. The capacity management that Nutanix delivers has already enabled us to be more effective with the power consumption of our IT hardware,” says Daramola.

Even though the organisation built its own power station several years ago to break away from the unreliable national grid, it still wants to ensure that its environment is running as optimally as possible. It can now be even more energy efficient using Nutanix solutions.

“The high availability that Nutanix provides us is significant as FMN no longer has to deal with an abrupt shutdown of any of the IT infrastructure. Our end users have significantly improved their productivity as they have more time to focus on operations. Before, they were plagued by interruptions on systems not performing as they should. This stability translates to an increase in revenue for the company with FMN almost tripling the profit of last year thanks to a stable IT environment,” he says.

And thanks to Nutanix, FMN has now no need to perform any maintenance after hours considerably reducing the administrative overhead.

“IT maintenance is now so user-friendly we can perform it at any time with no disruptions to operations. Using the Nutanix management solution provides us with a central console to have complete visibility into our entire stack. Everything can now be done behind a single pane of glass completely eliminating our silo-based approach of the past. And we did all of this remotely - during a pandemic,” says Daramola.

Daramola also says that the team couldn't believe the small form factor of the Nutanix solution when it landed. “When our partner informed us, our gear had arrived we were so excited we wanted to hire a truck to go and collect it. Surprisingly, when the boxes arrived, we couldn't believe what we saw. I actually asked where is the equipment where are these four nodes we bought, surely they can't be in those small boxes.”

LOOKING AHEAD

Daramola says that such has been the benefits of using Nutanix that FMN is looking at even more ways to leverage the technology.

“We are now able to consider things like automation and other projects that can assist us in improving our operations even further. Nutanix has given us the ability to become more flexible and innovative. We are no longer constrained by the technology but rather only limited by our imagination.”

He says with Nutanix; the company has added a new dimension to its IT environment.

“We have moved from ticking boxes to managing the business the way it is meant to be done. With Nutanix, we have gone from fighting fires to focusing on business growth and other opportunities,” he concludes.



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