Staff at leading building supplier achieve better work-life balance and 80% more time to create an impact.

Langs Enables Mobile Workforce with Nutanix

LANGS
BUILDING SUPPLIES

CHALLENGE

A difficult year for the business in 2012 meant Langs had put on hold any spend on critical IT infrastructure. This meant that everything from compute to storage, network etc. was now outdated and some major investment was needed. The need to upgrade the lot gave the IT and management team the opportunity to consider what they wanted that lot to be.

Thin clients presented some elements of mobility that allowed design and engineering staff to spend more time on site and with customers where they belong, but they had issues. There was still plenty of coming back to the office to upload information – nothing was fully automated. The CAD (computer-aided design) software needed by companies like Langs is complex and requires modern infrastructure to run properly, particularly in a virtual environment. The system was unreliable and any issues could make it slower or halt it entirely.

The IT team spent huge amounts of time dealing with outages and issues with any one or multiple parts of its infrastructure. This had a negative impact on productivity for both IT staff and all within the company. Langs needed something reliable, which didn't need to always be minded, and could allow IT to contribute more to the business, staff and customers.

From a staffing perspective, expertise from other areas in Australia and indeed throughout the world was unavailable to the company, placing it at a competitive disadvantage. "Scalability was of huge importance to us as well," added Matthew Day, CIO, Langs Building Supplies. "We had started growing again as a business and needed infrastructure that could easily match that. In a sense, we needed private cloud – all the benefits of public – but under our roof."

SOLUTION

Langs conducted extensive research and discussions to find the right solution. It spoke to a number of major vendors, including HP, Dell EMC, IBM, Oracle, and more before it was introduced to Nutanix.

"It was refreshing and eye-opening," said Day. "Nutanix had all the complexity we needed but in the easiest and most adaptable package. The performance was one thing, but that's just the entry ticket. My big questions were what can it do to help my business units, my profit centres on a bad day? Nutanix was the only vendor we spoke to that gave us peace of mind – not to mention proof of concept – that it could give us the reliability and redundancy we needed."

Nutanix's software-defined nature was a huge selling point. "Hardware is at its best the day you buy it. My coffee machine will never be as good as the day I got it, and eventually it will break. Nutanix is probably 70% better now than the day we first got it."

"In the past you'd almost be annoyed by staff asking you to help them to solve problems – don't they understand I've got this data centre to deal with? Now with Nutanix, we enjoy working with staff and customers to help improve their experiences. It's different when 'datacentre babysitting' isn't getting in the way."

– Matthew Day,
Chief Information Officer,
Langs Building Supplies

NUTANIX™
Your Enterprise Cloud Platform

Langs initially took on three Nutanix nodes with NVIDIA GRID GPU card, and has now upgraded this to include additional nodes with NVIDIA GRID GPU cards running a total of 10 nodes as the company does more with the Platform.

An IT team focused on the job at hand

Nutanix delivered a complete ROI in just three months since the solution was first deployed, but that's only the very beginning in terms of the positive impact it's had on the company.

"The proof is in the pudding with Nutanix," said Day. "Vendor relationships, over time tend to sour at one point or another – something inevitably goes wrong. I've been a customer of Nutanix for more than four years now and it's still extremely positive. The support is incredible, from its leadership team all the way down."

Nutanix's IT team has calculated it has around 80% more time to spend working with customers, staff and spinning up new services and applications that help the business.

"In the past you'd almost be annoyed by staff asking you to help them to solve problems or do things – don't they understand I've got this data centre to deal with? If you can't help them to do something, shadow IT can creep in, which can cross with governance policies. Now with Nutanix, we enjoy working with staff and customers to help improve their experiences. It's different when the 'infrastructure babysitting' isn't getting in the way."

A truly mobile workforce

The virtual desktop environment has allowed all staff – not just on the design and engineering side – to be fully mobile. This has also created a better work-life balance and allowed staff to be both productive and work how and where they want.

"People who used to spend 6AM – 6PM now drop the kids off at school, work in the office for six hours, pick them up from school, spend quality time, and then do another two hours from home. It's on their terms with VDI and Nutanix."

This new level of mobility has also significantly increased the hiring pool from which Langs can draw talent and expertise, which has helped the business grow in the past few years. As well as supporting local employment in South East Queensland, the company now also has designers and other staff throughout Australia and across the world in areas such as the UK, Pakistan, Vietnam and the US.

Initially, the main application supported by Nutanix was CAD Software Grid 1.0. Grid is a server-based graphic design solution used by designers and engineers in Langs. VDI running on Nutanix saw fantastic results and meant designers and engineers could replicate their work in the office out in the field where it is more effective and where they can be customer-focussed.

"Our biggest external gain from the system is that we've been able to take our in-house software externally," said Neil Whinton, General Manager Fabrication, Langs Building Supplies. "We are now able to take complex CAD and engineering design software to site, into the actual building environment."

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Recently, the company made the move up to Grid 2.0, the latest platform release from Nvidia, which delivers higher performance, efficiency and flexibility improvements for virtualised graphics. Despite the superiority of the updated platform, Nutanix ensures the experience is still seamless with the standards Langs and its customers expect. The upgrade gives users access to Microsoft's Windows 10 and DirectX 11 and much more dedicated video RAM.

Software-defined simplicity

Previously, the IT team had to deploy and manage a huge range of devices to facilitate the daily operations of the company. It really mattered what device a team member was using, and this led to unnecessary costs and time wasted.

"It used to very much be 'You need to get one of these!'," said Day. "Now we don't care about the endpoint, all our team can use whatever device makes them happy because we control the gateway to our systems and it's all software-defined. iPad, Android, laptop, or any combination that can run the software – it's all fine.

"Before Nutanix, if one of our drivers was making a delivery they'd be equipped with a phone, sat nav, camera and a tracking device. The combined cost is huge. Upon arriving at a site, the driver would have to take a photo with the camera of the goods being delivered, the manifest, etc. There might be 100 photos taken per run. When returning to the office, the camera would be handed over and photos manually downloaded. If there was an issue, we had to dig through to find the right photo to prove the delivery was made for example."

Now each driver needs just one device to manage all of the above, syncing to one secure system where everything is automated. It lands in Lang's ERP without any human intervention. The IT team sees the incredible change as going from pure information technology to operational technology.

"I still speak to other vendors," concluded Day. "I think it's important to keep in tune with what others in the market are doing, but the reality is that none of them are at the table. They're fumbling around in the dark compared with Nutanix."

Company
Langs Building Supplies is a Queensland-based and family-owned building component manufacturer and wholesale provider of building supplies. The company was started in 1976 and employs almost 300 staff in Queensland and throughout Australia and the rest of the world. Langs is a one-stop-shop for every step of the building hardware process, from timber and hardware products to roof trusses, wall frames, floor systems and door and aluminium windows.

Industry
Building Construction

Business Need
A reliable IT infrastructure that could leverage VDI to allow mobility for engineers to use complex CAD software from numerous geographical locations, a better work-life balance for team members, and allow IT staff to focus on helping the business instead of 'babysitting the datacentre'.

Solution
› Nutanix Enterprise Cloud Platform

› NVIDIA GRID GPU cards

› VMware Horizon View

Benefits
› Complete ROI within just three months

› 80% of time previously spent on 'babysitting IT infrastructure' given back to IT manager to focus on helping customers, staff and contributing to the business

› 96% reduction in power costs

› 83% reduction in rack space

› Better security and availability with proven scalability