

**Objective**

To provide a cloud services platform with a range of on-demand Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) and Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) solutions to New Zealand's business community

Approach

Researched and evaluated various platform options based on their technology and wider support ecosystems

IT Matters

- Provides composable computing to enable dynamic changes in physical resources
- Quickens the time taken to bring nodes online
- Introduces automated processes to keep operations workforce small and overheads low

Business Matters

- Gives LayerX Group a competitive lead in the New Zealand market
- Speeds the development of customers' businesses
- Reduces manpower and cost overheads through eliminating the need to second-guess resource provision

LayerX platform accelerates business for New Zealand's SMBs

First Kiwi deployment of HPE Synergy delivers vital flexibility for leading IT service provider



Hamilton-based LayerX Group provides IT services to small and medium-sized businesses with its vGRID suite of homegrown cloud infrastructure and application solutions. To cope with ever-changing customer demands and variable workloads, it has streamlined the operation of these flagship offerings with composable computing delivered by HPE Synergy with HPE OneView.

Challenge**Ever-changing demands and workloads**

With constantly changing customer demands and variable workloads, the world of the IT service provider is unpredictable territory. Systems must be flexible, quick and reliable if viable performance levels are to be delivered and that needs considerable technical know-how.

One company that's well-aware of these challenges is New Zealand-based LayerX Group whose home-grown cloud infrastructure and applications solution vGRID provides Software-as-a-Service (SaaS) and Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) tailored for the small to medium business (SMB) market.

“HPE Synergy and HPE OneView are going to play a significant long-term role for us. They bring our vGRID cloud services platform to life by enabling customers to deploy their own dedicated resources in the same way they would a virtual machine. This autonomy enables them to consume what they want, when they want it, and that’s a powerful value proposition.”

– Bruce Trevarthen, group CEO, LayerX Group

Demand for the vGRID portfolio of on-demand services is growing and LayerX must constantly strive to improve its performance and versatility, having previously been named as one of Asia Pacific’s fastest-growing companies in the Deloitte Fast 50 index.

“We’re an innovative company so we’re always looking to push the envelope with technology to make businesses and industries more productive and effective,” says group CEO, Bruce Trevarthen. “We develop our own products and services and take them to market, so rather than commissioned work we actually do our own R&D and grow our own initiatives. The largest of those over the last decade has been our vGRID public cloud automation suite. It’s based on HPE hardware and the IT capability of the vGRID suite is absolutely critical to our go-to-market strategy - to our key brand values of performance, reliability and control.”

For ten years LayerX has constantly refined its hardware stack, looking at other vendor solutions but always returning to HPE ProLiant servers and HPE 3PAR storage.

“This was a rock-solid platform, a zero downtime SAN, but we wanted more flexibility to take existing products to market in new ways,” says Trevarthen. “We’re living in a very dynamic age and in a dynamic industry so we have to be able to adapt and to change our mind on how we take a product to market.”

Solution

Software-defined intelligence

LayerX decided that the composable infrastructure offered by HPE Synergy would provide it with the flexibility its business demanded. As Trevarthen explains, the demanding criteria for this decision covered more than pure technology: “We’re all about performance and reliability and so when it comes to buying tin, or hardware, it’s not so much just about the tin. Everyone knows that HPE makes the best hardware but for us, it’s more about the ecosystem around that hardware. What’s the diligence on patching? What’s the diligence on interoperability between the componentry? What’s the relationship with silicon vendors? What’s the in-country support? All these things really matter when you need to rely on this hardware for your day-to-day operation and when we looked at other vendors, they fell short in one or many of these areas. That’s one reason why we decided to stick with HPE.”

HPE Synergy was also chosen because it would deliver the dynamic compute capability LayerX required to increase its go-to-market agility. It was efficiently implemented with HPE Pointnext flying a specialist engineer to New Zealand to oversee the operation.



“We’re living in a very dynamic age and in an industry that personifies that dynamism,” says Trevarthen. “Our customers change their minds and the market changes so we have to be able to adapt with technology that allows us to achieve the performance levels that we’re taking to market. We get that dynamic capability with the composable infrastructure offered by HPE Synergy. The ability to repurpose the infrastructure enables us to repurpose the workload and that gives us the ability to maximize our investment.”

One major decision criteria was the inclusion of Intel® processors in Synergy. Trevarthen comments: “Intel’s really the only choice. The Intel partnership with Hewlett Packard Enterprise is obviously very strong and I think it’s critical to the long-term relevance of all of the products. It supports HPE’s capability to deliver solutions that surpass the rest of the industry and to deliver products that are more relevant to future IT needs. There is a constant need to push the IT envelope and Intel does that very well and the combination of Intel innovation with HPE activities is very strong.”

The business criticality of this new solution is protected by HPE Proactive Care support delivered by HPE Pointnext. LayerX chief technology officer, Bryce Farmilo knows the benefits that such a contract delivers: “Our customers rely on the vGRID platform to always be available and to deliver reliability and performance.”

“Our vendor support needs to ensure we can make good on that commitment and HPE Proactive Care allows us to deliver on customer expectations. We know we will get a rapid response from HPE in case of hardware failure and expert support when technical issues need deep investigation. Phone home features built into HPE OneView and Insight Remote Support mean that HPE can be working to resolve an issue before we get the chance to open a support case. This keeps the risk of service impacting events very low and customer satisfaction high.”

Benefit

Fluid resource pools

Choosing the HPE Synergy composable infrastructure, combined with HPE OneView, has enabled LayerX to take a lead in New Zealand by using the hybrid infrastructure to deliver new values and business opportunities. Using fluid resource pools, software-defined intelligence and a unified API allows the vGRID platform to continually optimize the right mix of traditional and private cloud resources.

“HPE Synergy not only gives us the ability to dynamically change how we put our physical resources to use but it also brings additional policies and procedures, such as templating. The composable architecture enables us to prescribe exactly how we take a node online, what storage it needs to attach to and what networks it needs to be a part of.”

Customer at a glance

Hardware

- HPE Synergy

Software

- HPE OneView

HPE Pointnext services

- HPE Proactive Care
- HPE Installation and Deployment Services

“We confidently expect that HPE Synergy will bring to life some new revenue opportunities and certainly some new capabilities in terms of our product and service offerings.”

– Bruce Trevarthen, group CEO, LayerX Group

“We can prescribe all of that in the template so the operations team simply expand the cluster - or in fact, the cluster can expand itself if it gets busy,” says Trevarthen. “Previously, it may have taken one or two hours to bring a node online; now it’s something that happens by itself or maybe at the click of one or two buttons and that has a profound impact on our human resource.”

HPE Synergy not only supports the day-to-day delivery of vGRID but actually enhances the offering. Trevarthen sees HPE OneView as an important component of the solution because it enables vGRID to orchestrate the composable infrastructure and prescribe, in a very granular fashion, exactly what each node in the frame will do.

“The HPE Synergy environment really brings vGRID to life,” explains Trevarthen. “Now, not only can the vGRID control panels give you the ability to deploy a virtual machine in a moment but we can actually dedicate a Synergy node to a specific customer in the same way that a virtual machine (VM) can be deployed.”

“HPE Synergy definitely brings new products to life and gives us the ability to do that in a computational or scripted way. That means we don’t have to rely on human resources, which means it can happen at two o’clock in the morning if it must. Also, as a service provider, every one of our sites is built the same way and very prescribed which gives us a common management layer. That enables us to keep our operations team small and our overheads low.”

HPE Synergy delivers the versatility that is essential for service providers, enabling vGRID to easily re-purpose clusters and re-assign variable workloads in line with customer demands. The knock-on effect of this is that the company does not have to buy a new service because one cluster is busy. It can maximize its infrastructure investment and keep prices down. The end result is that LayerX can now deliver the highest levels of performance and reliability to New Zealand’s small and mid-sized companies who are looking to accelerate their own business.

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