XEFI implements cloud solutions as the foundation for growth

French service provider uses HPE Synergy to support IT transformation

Industry
IT

Objective
Implement a simple, scalable, and sustainable cloud architecture to deliver services

Approach
XEFI was convinced that HPE Synergy would meet the company's needs—thanks to its power, its interoperability with HPE 3PAR, and its high-quality functionality

IT matters
- Reduces system management time by one-third
- Makes disaster recovery services available within 48 hours
- Provides future-proof architecture

Business matters
- Supports ambitious growth plans
- Controls IT staffing levels
- Enables a wide range of services to increase competitiveness

IT services provider XEFI offers hosting solutions for the small and medium-sized business market. With more than 60 branches in France, the group needed a reliable, sustainable platform for its IT systems and services. It chose to implement a cloud solution based on HPE Synergy composable computing and HPE 3PAR storage.

Challenge

Flexible hosting services for SMBs
Founded over two decades ago, XEFI (formerly CFI Maintenance Informatique) is an IT service provider specializing in the small and medium business (SMB) market. It has 60 separate branches with 630 employees located across France.

In 2018, XEFI achieved a total turnover of €105 million of which 80% was generated by the SMB market. It provides turnkey services to meet all the IT needs of its clients, which help XEFI stand out from the competition. These include maintenance and managed services, security and internet connections, software services, printing, security, backup, and disaster recovery.

"We were particularly impressed by the seamless interoperability between HPE Synergy and HPE 3PAR arrays when compared with other less open, more proprietary products. Also, we greatly value the personal contacts we have developed with the HPE team over time."

– Sacha Rosenthal, Founder, XEFI

"With my current HPE Synergy platform I could double, or even triple, the number of customers using my data center."

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Another important differentiator is its growing lineup of independent franchisees, as founder of XEFI Group, Sacha Rosenthal, explains: "It's in our DNA to be as close as possible to our customers and to implement services as quickly as possible."

Supporting this demanding business meant that XEFI faced increased internal and external pressures. In addition, it also needed to keep up with the fast pace of new and emerging technologies and to support ambitious growth plans.

"Our aim is to double our number of branches to 120 by 2020. That is on top of the two or three IT retailers that join our franchise network every month," says Sacha Rosenthal.

Solution

IT transformation
To meet these challenges, the company decided to develop a new IT strategy around cloud computing and to upgrade its data center. To make these plans a reality, it needed to replace its Cisco blade for its cloud offering and chose an **HPE Synergy 480 Gen10 platform with HPE Synergy 480 Gen10 compute modules** and connected to **HPE 3PAR StoreServ Storage** with a capacity of 300 TB.

The workload for this first installation was to support internal IT needs and those of the franchisee network, but the group wanted to go further with a new virtualization project using VMware® and Microsoft® Hyper-V.

It also wanted to increase storage capacity, and standardize and automate the installation of new services.

Rosenthal was convinced by the benefits of blade technology for the cloud in terms of power, redundancy, and capacity management so XEFI implemented a second HPE Synergy 12000 Frame. That brought the total number of Synergy compute modules to nine and the systems are managed by HPE Synergy Composer based on **HPE OneView software**. To ensure high availability, XEFI has also created a smaller autonomous HPE Synergy and HPE 3PAR environment that can swing into action in the event of a failure.

"During the decision-making process, we were particularly impressed by the seamless interoperability between HPE Synergy and HPE 3PAR, compared with other less open, more proprietary products," says Sacha Rosenthal. "Also, we greatly valued the personal contacts we have developed with the HPE team over time."

HPE Synergy is a composable infrastructure, which brings compute, network, and storage together as a single platform, creating fluid resource pools managed through a single API. It is software-defined and enables users to quickly program and provision their whole infrastructure through automation. With **HPE Pointnext** providing installation services, XEFI's whole solution was up and running within three weeks and covered by an HPE Foundation Care support contract.

> "We already host more than 1,800 clients on our HPE Synergy platform and we believe that we could easily accommodate twice that number."
>
> – Sacha Rosenthal, Founder, XEFI

Customer at a glance

Hardware
- HPE Synergy 480 Gen10
- HPE ProLiant Gen10
- HPE 3PAR StoreServ Storage
- HPE Synergy Composer
- HPE StoreOnce

Software
- HPE OneView

HPE Pointnext
- HPE Foundation Care

[1] Assuming dedupe ratio of 20:1 as compared to a fully hydrated backup.

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Benefits

Future-proof environment

Increased compute power was what XEFI required when it embarked on this project and major factors that guaranteed this processing performance were the two Intel® Xeon® Gold 6154 processors in each of the HPE Synergy compute modules. They have given XEFI high server density without compromising processing capacity, unlike conventional blade architectures which do not support these processors.

"We already host more than 1,800 clients and we believe that we can easily accommodate twice that number as it stands at the moment," says Sacha Rosenthal.

HPE StoreOnce backup appliance is also part of XEFI's infrastructure. Using deduplication, it can reduce backup data quantities by up to 95%[1] and this offers a considerable advantage when XEFI is providing customer data security services.

The power and flexibility of HPE Synergy has also supported some demanding special cloud projects. These include EvoluCloud, which enables the virtualization of business customers' servers in the XEFI cloud. It delivers 99.9% availability and runs on the HPE Synergy platform.

XEFI's new environment also supports cloud-based storage and disaster recovery services. In the event of a customer crash, a virtual machine can be made available within a few minutes.

"Our aim is to respond to customer requests as rapidly as possible, providing an operational installation within 48 hours," explains Sacha Rosenthal.
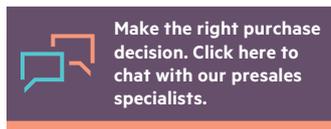
The flexibility delivered by the HPE Synergy composable infrastructure makes it both powerful and scalable so it is ideal for coping with the market fluctuations that IT service providers like XEFI can experience. Also, the scope of HPE Synergy can be easily increased by adding more blades. Ease of management is another advantage as the company requires only 10 engineers to manage its IT environment and despite an increase in cloud business, the size of that team has remained unchanged. XEFI has also been able to reduce its energy bill as well, cutting system management time by one third.

Looking to the future, the XEFI Group is now considering Photonics and Gen-Z technologies that are already incorporated into the HPE Synergy architecture. The former uses a fiber optic cable within the chassis to move data at speeds in excess of 1.2 TB/s. The latter conforms to a new open interconnection protocol to create high-performance solutions with low latency.

HPE Synergy is the ideal solution for XEFI Group's current and future needs. Sacha Rosenthal concludes: "With my current HPE Synergy platform, I could double, or even triple, the number of customers using my data center."

Learn more at
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