A Solid Decision for Improving Business Agility

Intel® processors help FICO virtualize data center and desktop environments, increasing business agility and saving USD 14 million over three years.

Well known for its myFICO® credit scoring service for consumers, FICO is a leading provider of decision management, fraud detection, and credit risk solutions for businesses in a range of fields. To enhance its own business agility and consolidate a large IT infrastructure, FICO virtualized its data centers with virtualization software from VMware and Intel® Xeon® processor-based servers. The company’s IT group then extended virtualization to the desktop, using Intel technologies to deliver performance, flexibility, simplified management, and security. Virtualization efforts are helping FICO improve agility while saving more than USD 14 million over three years.

CHALLENGES

• **Enhance business agility.** Enable the business to respond rapidly to marketplace changes and capitalize on new opportunities.

• **Consolidate IT.** Decrease the number of physical servers and data centers, which have expanded through corporate acquisitions and the deployment of new services.

• **Cut costs.** Reduce costs for hardware expenditures, power, cooling, real estate, and IT support by creating consolidated, standardized data center and desktop environments.

SOLUTION

• **Virtualization with Intel technologies.** The IT group virtualized its data center with VMware vSphere® software and HP ProLiant® servers based on the Intel Xeon processor 5500 series. They then virtualized more than 500 desktop systems with VMware View® software and Dell Latitude® laptops equipped with Intel Core™ vPro™ processors.

IMPACT

• **Business agility.** With the ability to deploy new servers, build new desktop systems, and create new products faster than before, the company can better respond to change.

• **Data center consolidation.** Virtualization has helped the company consolidate 5,000 physical servers into fewer than 2,000 and shrink 16 data centers down to 4.

• **Tremendous cost savings.** Data center and desktop virtualization is helping FICO save more than USD 14 million over three years.

After years of corporate acquisitions and the addition of new services, FICO had a large, heterogeneous IT infrastructure, with 5,000 physical servers spread across 16 global data centers. “We needed to consolidate IT to reduce costs and simplify administration,” says Tom Grahek, senior director of technology delivery at FICO. “Our goal was to create an efficient infrastructure that could also provide the flexibility to meet changing business needs.”

Consolidation would include the IT infrastructure that supported the company’s geographically dispersed software development teams. “We have programmers in the United States, England, and India. Rather than building separate data centers in each of those locations, we wanted to create a centralized infrastructure that they could share,” says Grahek. “With a shared code repository and testing environment, we could enhance our development efficiency while cutting costs.”
Intel® Processors Provide the Foundation for Enterprise Virtualization

FICO Virtualizes Data Centers with Intel® Xeon® Processors

The FICO IT group decided to virtualize its infrastructure with VMware vSphere software and HP ProLiant servers based on Intel Xeon processors after having explored virtualization with servers based on a competing processing architecture. FICO is now standardizing on HP ProLiant BL4940 G6 blades equipped with the Intel Xeon processor 5500 series. “The Intel Xeon processor 5500 series has the right combination of CPU performance and memory capacity to make the most of virtualization,” says Christopher Rence, vice president and CIO at FICO. “With Intel processors, we can maximize the number of virtual servers on each physical host and dramatically consolidate our infrastructure.”

Intel Dynamic Virtual Client Approach Maximizes Desktop Flexibility

The IT group extended virtualization to the desktop of software developers by deploying VMware View software and Dell Latitude E6400 laptops using Intel Core™ vPro™ processors. With vPro technology, FICO can manage systems from a centralized support center. Other components of the vPro technology platform help increase performance and ensure security for a virtualized desktop environment. Intel® Virtualization Technology (Intel® VT) helps boost performance by offloading workloads to hardware while Intel® Trusted Execution Technology makes sure that a client is secure before running the virtualized environment.

“Intel Core vPro processors enable us to provide developers with a strong user experience, push client updates and diagnose problems easily, and protect our intellectual property,” says Grahek. These Intel technologies support Intel’s dynamic virtual client approach to virtualization, which gives organizations the flexibility to use different virtualization models for different needs. “While our software developers use a fully virtualized desktop environment, IT support staff have a hybrid environment, running productivity applications locally and accessing administrative applications from the data center,” says Grahek. “By using Intel Core vPro processors in our client systems, we have the flexibility to use a range of virtualization models and address the needs of various job functions.”

FICO Increases Business Agility with Virtualization

Virtualization is helping accelerate deployment of new services and new desktops. “In the past, it took weeks to acquire and set up a new physical server. With a virtualized environment, we can provision a server in a few hours,” says Grahek. “Whether management wants us to offer a new consumer service or launch a new software development project, we can respond quickly. As a result, the business can be much more responsive to a changing marketplace.”

Virtualization also simplifies desktop provisioning. “We maintain a single software image for each development environment. Instead of spending days installing software each time we add a developer or move someone to a new project, we can rapidly provision an image from the data center through the virtual desktop,” says Grahek. “With virtualization, we can sustain developer productivity and reallocate resources much more quickly than before.”

Intel Performance Accelerates Time to Market

FICO software developers take advantage of the performance of Intel processors used in the centralized data center to help speed up their work. “Bringing products to market quickly is essential for sustaining our competitive edge and, in the case of fraud prevention products, staying ahead of criminals,” says Grahek. “By using the latest Intel processors in the data center, we can reduce the time to compile and test code, and ultimately release our products sooner.”

Data Center Consolidation Helps FICO Save More than USD 14 Million

“By virtualizing with Intel processors, we have consolidated 5,000 physical servers into fewer than 2,000, and moved from 16 data centers to 4,” says Grahek. “We are avoiding USD 2 million on hardware, and we will save USD 3 million on power and cooling over three years. With fewer servers to manage, we’re also saving more than USD 9 million in IT labor costs over the next three years. The savings we’re achieving by virtualizing with VMware and Intel technologies will enable us to reinvest in product development so we can continue to drive innovation for our customers.”


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