

MAJOR PROFESSIONAL SPORTS LEAGUE Office of the Commissioner

In major league sports, the season may last for months, but for an infrastructure architect in the Office of the Commissioner, it's a year-round obsession. His job is to manage the IT infrastructure of the Office the Commissioner, including optimizing the capacity and performance of its virtual environment.

Headquartered in New York City, with satellite operations across the country, the Office of the Commissioner manages all league operations having to do with the play of the game (rules, union dealings, officiating, instant replay, etc), as well as league enterprises having to do with promoting the game (product licensing, merchandising, broadcasting, international operations, special events, etc).

The Office employs approximately 1,000 people, supported by just over 30 IT staff on the infrastructure architect's team.

Challenge

Running a major IT infrastructure in Manhattan poses unique challenges. Space is limited and price per square foot is extremely expensive. Yet the infrastructure architect's operation is responsible for bringing new applications online with increasing speed and service assurance. These applications provide mission-critical business data—from recruiting information to player stats to officials' schedules—accessed by staff and teams across the league.

To address this challenge, the infrastructure architect has implemented a virtualization strategy that reduces the procurement, configuration and deployment time associated with physical servers, and increases the speed to market and flexibility of critical IT resources. Out of more than 180 servers in his IT environment, 80 percent are virtual machines. This was a critical factor in being able to bring the league's new officiating system online with just 10 days notice before Opening Day.

But while virtualization has provided obvious advantages, it has also created headaches. In a span of just three months, the league went from demoing its VMware environment to using it to run its entire portal infrastructure (in lieu of 33 physical servers). The speed with which VM's were created introduced a new class of management problems associated with the league's dynamic data center, including exploding data volumes, objects in a constant state of flux and shifting relationships between objects.

The infrastructure architect found he was getting more information about the state of his IT environment from end-users than from his vCenter management server, and spending more time fighting fires than evaluating solutions. Problems included over-allocated resources, running out of storage space due to orphaned files, and crashing VMs due to attached media, such as CD-ROMs. Isolating the root cause of the problem was nearly impossible, and several times he had to take down and reboot his entire IT environment due to an otherwise simple problem.

CLIENT STATISTICS

1,000 employees

80% virtual environment

150+ Virtual Machines (VMs)

Reclaimed 1.2 terabytes
of space

"We've been able to see servers getting bogged down and data stores getting full, which has helped us be much more proactive than before—and I know the solution can do even more than I'm using it for. Hyper9 has paid for itself 10-times over with just the few things we've done so far."

Solution—Hyper9 Virtualization Manager

With Hyper9, the infrastructure architect found a way to proactively manage his virtual environment. The solution has provided the league's infrastructure team increased visibility to identify VM sprawl, reduce configuration drift and conduct troubleshooting, leading to greater cost savings and operational uptime.

One of the first queries he conducted using Hyper9 was the discovery of orphaned files, a search that took less than a minute to complete and resulted in reclaiming 1.2 terabytes of space. In the architect's words, "That's real money."

Another key area of focus has been the over-allocation of resources based on end-user requests.

As he describes, "I have a report every day that tells me which VMs have 4 CPUs and 4G RAM that are using less than five percent of each resource, respectively. I can take that back to my bosses and show them that while VMware looks like it's straining, actually 23 servers aren't using all their resources. If you give me the 'okay' to knock them back a little, I can keep you from having to buy another host for a few months. That's powerful stuff."

Hyper9 has also helped the infrastructure architect improve his line of sight to the business, providing greater context around the impact of virtual resources on key operational processes. This has been particularly useful when it comes to SLAs, or service level assurance.

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Longer term, the infrastructure architect expects his operation to manage the IT infrastructure cloud for all of the league's professional sports teams. Future plans for the Hyper9 deployment include establishing best practices around performance management and capacity planning, and providing business-level reporting to key management team members, customized by role and area of interest.



While some people track player stats and team points, the infrastructure architect watches for orphaned files, rogue VMs, and sub-par SLAs using Hyper9's Virtualization Manager.

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