CHALLENGE

A leading global financial services firm began looking to cloud computing as a means of lowering costs, enhancing scalability and meeting increasing business demands. After multiple executive briefing conferences and Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS) training classes in World Wide Technology’s (WWT) Advanced Technology Center (ATC), the firm selected Cisco UCS as their new cloud platform standard. To support their transition to UCS, the firm needed to rollout approximately 8,000 UCS servers to sites that serve multiple lines of business during the course of a single year.

“Unfortunately, a traditional order-and-install approach was slowing progress and threatening the firm’s adoption of UCS,” said Matt Long, business development manager with WWT. “Each domain was treated as a separate project from purchase order to installation, which led to a four-month timeline to stand up very large 160-blade UCS domains.” The delayed deployment resulted in a very low adoption rate for cloud services and increased complexity and costs with custom compute builds at every site, which undermined quality and led to inconsistent build standards across multiple locations.

SOLUTION

WWT’s people, processes and partners came together to develop a supply chain and integration solution designed to help the firm reduce costs, speed time to delivery, enforce quality standards and maximize its UCS investments.

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PEOPLE
The financial firm’s management, deployment engineers, and program and project managers met with WWT and Cisco representatives at WWT for an executive briefing conference to discuss the firm’s UCS deployment challenges and identify roadblocks. “The firm’s internal traditional purchase order (P.O.) and deployment process was clearly standing in the way of success as it involved multiple cumbersome steps and meeting implementation prerequisites before they could even generate a P.O. or place an order for equipment,” said Keith Seiden, quality assurance engineer with WWT. With guidance from WWT experts, the firm overhauled their traditional P.O. and deployment processes using WWT’s supply chain and integration services to enable efficiency and consistency across the UCS initiative.

PROCESSES
Material planning and purchasing were revamped based on demand forecasts and trends. “WWT has been contracted to purchase required equipment and centralize rack build services within our ATC Integration Labs. This means we can provide just-in-time delivery, enforce build standards, increase quality and reduce the costs tied to onsite custom builds,” said Norm DelCastillo, program manager with WWT.

Cisco UCS servers were pre-purchased in bulk and cached at WWT’s warehousing facility until just before the firm needed them onsite. Custom test environments were pre-built with integrated storage and networking to provide the closest production simulation. UCS blades were fully configured and tested by booting hardware and operating systems, running numerous test scripts and burning in for a minimum of 12 hours each. Fully populated racks were then shipped directly to the firm’s deployment sites, ready for connection and use. WWT also established custom SKUs and equipment bundles to streamline the ordering process for the customer.

PARTNER
Because of WWT’s established UCS expertise, and after careful physical review of WWT’s testing and integration process, Cisco Systems authorized WWT to model the firm’s environment to burn in and test all equipment before deployment with no impact to the standard warranty. Should faulty equipment or components arrive at one of the firm’s deployment sites, WWT would use Cisco-owned buffer stock that included new parts and end-tested blades to provide next-day replacement. This allowed the firm to proceed with deployments without managing through seven-to 10-day lead times for replacement parts.

With end-to-end support from WWT, the firm was able to accelerate their Cisco UCS deployments by 25 percent and cut the lag time from purchase order to production from four months to just four weeks.
RESULTS

“Instead of managing every line of business deployment individually, WWT now manages procurement, integration and logistics across the entire project to reduce complexity, streamline rollouts and enforce consistent high-quality standards across multiple locations,” said Dan Murphy, client director with WWT.

With end-to-end support from WWT, the firm was able to accelerate their Cisco UCS deployments by 25 percent and cut the lag time from purchase order to production from four months to just four weeks. Site-specific purchase orders are now cut at the time of shipment, speeding procurement and allowing immediate fulfillment of ready-built systems on a just-in-time basis.

Compared to the firm’s previous method of deploying compute capacity, WWT integration and supply chain services have delivered an estimated return on investment of 334 percent. Elements of financial impact include accelerated time to market, workforce productivity and avoidance of idle IT assets. The delivered financial impact as a percentage of the firm’s overall program investment of $80 million — which includes money for infrastructure and services — is about seven percent with $5.4 million in positive financial impact for the firm.

WWT’s test environment for this program is capable of staging and testing more than 1,000 blades per week and can scale as the firm’s demands change. UCS servers arrive on the firm’s data center floors racked, stacked and ready for implementation. Any “batch” hardware component failures or incompatibilities are now caught by WWT before they hit the customer site, so the firm doesn’t have to waste time troubleshooting. Component DOA instances for the firm quickly dropped to less than one percent under WWT’s Cisco-approved pre-testing and integration model.

The firm is so pleased with WWT’s supply chain and integration services that they are now provisioning network components to support the new UCS domains in a similar fashion and will soon integrate storage via WWT’s ATC Integration Labs to save more time and money.

ABOUT WWT

World Wide Technology (WWT) brings an innovative and proven approach to how organizations explore, evaluate, architect and implement technology.

Our customers have hands-on access to cutting-edge data center, networking, security and collaboration products in our Advanced Technology Center; technical expertise from our expansive team of engineering resources; and accelerated global product delivery, powered by a sophisticated supply chain management infrastructure.

By working with a financially strong, privately held systems integrator with more than $6B in annual revenue that ranks among the top tier of partners with Cisco, HP, EMC, NetApp, VMware and Citrix, our customers realize the benefits of saving time and money while significantly minimizing risk.

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