CLOUD MEETS CLOUD IN PERFECT DISASTER RECOVERY SOLUTION FOR ACS

ACS

A DIVISION OF ALTRON

CUSTOMER
ACS

WEB SITE
WWW.ACS-SA.COM

INDUSTRY
SERVICES

LOCATION
JOHANNESBURG, SOUTH AFRICA

KEY CHALLENGES
- Improve reliability of DR environment
- Simplify management of remote DR
- Gain visibility into DR environment

SOLUTION
VMware vCloud Director and VMware vCloud Availability enables the cloud environments of ACS and Routed to seamlessly interoperate. Delivering a failproof cloud-hosted DR solution for ACS and its clients.

BUSINESS BENEFITS
- Fully self-service DR environment delivered in 3 months
- Compliance with regulatory demands on DR
- Improved SLAs for all DR services
- Ability to demonstrate and prove data sovereignty

The digital world of today demands constant access to services. What would happen if you went to your doctor and were unable to process your payment because the card system was down? Managing secure electronic transactions and doing this in the cloud requires a failproof disaster recovery system. To enable effective disaster recovery for its own business and to extend the service to its customers, ACS, a division of Altron, has added another cloud to its mix by deploying DR-as-a-Service with VMware vCloud Availability into a VMware Cloud Provider Program (VCPP) partner.

ACS, was formed in 1993 and is a leading player in the secure electronic transactions market. Its business activities provide select vertical markets with the provision of electronic transaction solutions across Africa and is supported by a rich portfolio of quality services and products. Today the company delivers its services to customers via a secure cloud environment from its head office in Sandton, Johannesburg.

With data security concerns continuing to rise, ACS established a business unit within the company, CyberTech, that specialises in meeting customers' cyber security needs. CyberTech manages the services provided in this environment.

Challenge

ACS delivers a host cloud, security, network and hosting services from its own purpose-built VMware cloud and data centre environment. Including disaster recovery (DR) services for its client's transactional electronic card systems. After determining it needed to expand and improve its DR, the company established that it wasn't technically or economically feasible for it to build its own additional data centre and cloud environment just for DR.

"When you are a DR provider and provide DR services to your own customers who are processing financial transactional data, you need to ensure services rendered are reliable, secure and meet the compliance regulations as well as the uptime requirements of regulatory bodies as well as the customer," says Mira Andric, Manager Operations and Delivery at ACS. "We are a Cloud Service Provider (CSP) and we know what building a cloud entails. We didn't want to have to build a whole new cloud just for our own DR, so elected to outsource this to a CSP that mirrored our business and technical requirements.

"We host many of the large systems for the Altron Group, we also run a cyber security division for Altron and have a full SOC (security operations centre) and NOC (network operations centre). We have attained ISO 27001 certification and are PCI DSS Level 2 compliant, all of which are customer requirements because of the sensitivity of the data we manage. We work with large organisations with intensive SLAs," she says.

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MIRA ANDRIC
MANAGER OPERATIONS AND DELIVERY
ACS

VMWARE FOOTPRINT
• VMware vCloud Director
• VMware vCloud Availability
• VMware vSphere 6.5
• VMware vSAN

PLATFORM
• Cisco NEXUS
• Cisco UCS

PARTNER

The Solution

With a well-oiled VMware environment already in place, ACS began discussions with Routed, a CSP player on the VMware Cloud Provider Program. According to Andric the decision to appoint Routed hinged on the fact it could seamlessly integrate with the company's wall-to-floor VMware environment, the level of engagement, proactiveness, its willingness to negotiate and attractive pricing offered.

ACS' past solution was reliant on manual recovery; it was granular and complex. The IT teams wanted a self-service solution that they could implement and recover their own systems on demand without having to file tickets and wait for responses.

Running the cloud provisioning and management platform vCloud Director and integrating it directly into Routed's VMware vCloud Director platform via the VMware vCloud Availability DRaaS solution, ACS is now able to seamlessly provision virtual machines to host its DR environment. Replication of the environment is done to the Routed systems every hour and every machine that is replicated has its own managed firewalls within the Routed system. The entire service can be brought back in just two hours.

"The workloads we run are massive. We can't just take it to one of the big hyperscalers as the costs would just be crippling. People also forget that in the case of Azure (as an example) you have to manage, deploy and run your own security – again at what cost? Routed provides the infrastructure and a self-managed portal that our engineers can log in to for full visibility. We also have direct access to their senior engineers, and the system interoperability between their VMware vCloud Director and our VMware vCloud Director is completely seamless," says Andric.

The vCloud Availability Disaster Recovery solution on the Routed side allows for the replication of ACS' virtual machines and full integration of the vCloud Director environments on both sides. A vSphere replication appliance replicates into the Routed vSphere system and self-service capabilities are passed back to the client through vCloud Director.

The system is also hardware agnostic and ACS is no longer locked into buying the same storage devices and hardware at each refresh cycle.

Business Results and Benefits

If a financial switch goes down a customer will lose millions and the impact could be devastating.

"Availability is critical to the success of our operation. We ourselves have to be available 24x7x365. Because of the nature of the data we manage for our clients we also have to be able to answer questions around data sovereignty. It is transactional data, so if a client wants to know where their data is, we need to be able to inform a client" adds Andric.

ACS migrated over 30 TB of (backup) data over to the Routed cloud during a period of two weeks, while the full project was completed in three months.

"Our goal is to ensure systems perform accurately and efficiently with no system down time. We honour our commitment to our customers and strive to provide them with the best possible service and give them peace of mind where data security comes into play."

ACS is also assured of security across the environment, they can actively monitor potential security breaches and act accordingly. It is running DR-as-a-

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Service in a scalable, flexible and easy to use system that is now a five-click scenario to run and invoke DR.

With specialist skills, infrastructure and efficient resources to assist companies, we empower our customers with self-service cloud-based solutions. With ACS we have two VMware cloud providers talking to each other with ease. Service Provider to Service Provider – where cloud meets cloud in perfect unity. Because we both run VMware on either end, if ACS needs to invoke recovery, they are assured that the destination works," states Andrew Cruise, Managing Director at Routed.

Looking ahead

"The biggest benefit to us is that we have a partner looking at implementing a common layer of storage for storage replication and are open to collaborating with us on all of our future systems. Because they run off of VMware this is so much easier. We don't view Routed as an IaaS supplier – they are a partner in our business, and we are currently exploring ways to work together (in the cloud) in the future" ends Andric.

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