

Data center proof of concept aces health system's stress test

Catholic Health Partners (CHP) is the largest health system in Ohio, with more than 33,000 associates in over 100 acute care hospitals, long-term care facilities, housing sites for the elderly, home health agencies, hospice programs, wellness centers and other healthcare organizations across Ohio and Kentucky.



Zones has been a preferred supplier of IT products and services to CHP since 2010. In that time, the Zones team has executed a number of IT projects, including a system-wide migration to Microsoft Exchange Online. Zones' service and attention to detail throughout these projects created a trusted partnership between Zones and the IT leaders and systems professionals at CHP.

In mid-2012, CHP IT leadership began working on the healthcare system's major IT infrastructure initiative for 2013: A complete refresh of its existing server and storage infrastructure hosting the mission-critical EMR application, EPIC.

A complete solution

After months of investigating available solutions, the CHP team felt that the FlexPod solution proposed by Zones would provide the best balance of functionality and scalability.

Consisting of Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS) running the VMware ESXi hypervisor with NetApp Storage, the FlexPod data center platform offered CHP a pre-validated solution combining storage, networking and server components integrated into a single flexible architecture. FlexPod is specifically designed to ease IT

transformation to virtual infrastructure and cloud computing with maximum efficiency, minimal risk, and increased flexibility.

Just as important, the FlexPod architecture can scale up or out, and can be optimized for a variety of mixed workloads in both virtualized and non-virtualized environments, which would allow CHP to perform a phased transition over time.

While CHP's IT leaders were enthusiastic about the potential FlexPod represented, they wanted to see how it would perform when tasked with the demands of their specific requirements. The only way to do that would be to build out a fully functioning proof-of-concept.

Confident that the FlexPod solution was the right answer for CHP, the Zones team decided to invest approximately \$100,000 to build out a complete FlexPod proof-of-concept system at Zones' Center for Advanced Technology Solutions in Carol Stream, Illinois and let the CHP team spend a week putting it through its paces.

Project:

Phased refresh of the health care provider's two primary data centers

Challenge:

Prove the viability of the Cisco FlexPod architecture proposed

Solution:

Design and build a fully functional proof-of-concept at Zones' Center for Advanced Technology Solutions near Chicago

Result:

CHP's IT team gained confidence in the FlexPod system and Zones' capabilities. This led to a large-scale FlexPod deployment at CHP data centers and satellite locations

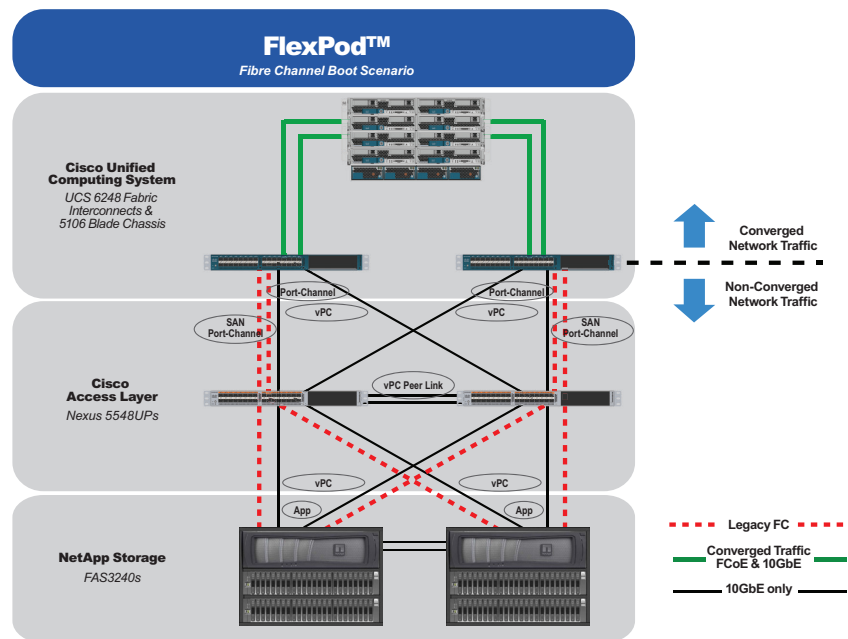
The Proof-of-Concept hardware and software components consisted of the following:

- > Cisco UCS Chassis with three half-width server blades
- > Cisco 6248 Fabric InterConnects
- > Cisco Nexus 5548 Network Switch
- > Cisco Nexus 1000v Network Switch
- > NetApp FAS 2240 Storage Platform
- > VMware Virtualization Hypervisor
- > Windows 2008 Server for guest VMs
- > Citrix XenApp on-demand application delivery solution

A convincing performance

A team of Zones Solutions Architects with expertise across Cisco UCS, NetApp Storage and VMware virtualization were assigned to build out the FlexPod Proof of Concept for CHP. Working late into the evening Friday, and all day Saturday and Sunday, the components were racked and tested.

The Zones Advanced Technology Solutions team completed the FlexPod data center configuration including storage, networking and server components integrated into a single flexible architecture. The design was essentially a scaled-down build of the enterprise FlexPod solution proposed for the healthcare organization.



On Monday morning the 10-member CHP team arrived at Zones' Center for Advanced Technology Solutions in Carol Stream.

The team included the hospital system's IT leaders as well as the Dell contract engineers responsible for maintaining CHP's IT systems. Inside, the CHP team found an accurate, albeit scaled-down, replication of the proposed production environment hosting the hospital system's EPIC EMR application.

During the week of testing that followed, the CHP team ran extensive tests on the POC, experiencing the benefits of the FlexPod solution first-hand.

The system hit all their targets for functionality, and offered other advantages as well.

The team realized that the FlexPod pre-designed and pre-validated base data center configuration would make for an easier and more cost efficient phased deployment, versus designing, specifying and building a data center solution from multiple vendors.

The sale was completed, leading to the phased transition to the FlexPod solution in the healthcare provider's two primary data centers. Shortly afterward, CHP realized that it could realize even greater efficiencies and capabilities by deploying additional FlexPod configurations in a number of their satellite facilities.