Meghna Group Easily Ramps Up Resources to Keep Apps Available During Peak Periods

Industry
Conglomerate

Founded in 1976, leading conglomerate Meghna Group of Industries reports annual earnings of more than USD $2.5 billion from over 20 business verticals including consumer goods, chemicals, real estate and utilities. It also exports to 25 countries in the Middle East, Southeast Asia, Europe, South Africa, as well as North and South America.
https://www.mgi.org/

Industry
Conglomerate

Strategic priorities
• Multi-Cloud

Partner
Established in 2013 and headquartered in Dhaka, Omega Exim is a one-stop IT solutions provider, serving corporate customers in Bangladesh. The company employs more than 100 people.
https://www.omegaximltd.com/

VMware footprint
• Advanced VMware® vCloud Suite®

• VMware NSX® Data Center

Meghna Group of Industries (MGI), a leading conglomerate in Bangladesh, had a disparate infrastructure that made it difficult for the IT team to deliver resources quickly to business users. This led to regular downtime of critical applications during busy seasons. To centrally manage all its infrastructure and apps, Meghna Group deployed VMware vCloud Suite and VMware NSX Data Center in its new IT hub, with support from IT solutions provider Omega Exim. As a result, the organization has reduced its operating costs while ensuring high availability for its in-house apps at all times, thus increasing its agility in responding to business demands.

App downtime during peak periods

From its origins in 1976 as a small trading company, MGI has grown and diversified into one of the largest conglomerates in Bangladesh, employing 35,000 people. Its businesses span more than 20 industries, ranging from consumer goods to aviation, with its products used in one of every two households in the country.

The company's gradual expansion over nearly five decades introduced a diverse array of IT resources aligned to different business units. With more than 100 offices around Bangladesh, MGI ended up with eight to ten data centers.

> "Because of VMware and Omega Exim, we can now deliver agility without compromising compliance and control. We are proof that with VMware solutions, we can deliver scalable IT services to meet business demand and respond to market changes quickly."
>
> Maniruzzaman Chowdhury, Senior Assistant General Manager, IT, Meghna Group of Industries

Watch how Meghna Group solved their month-end challenges

Added to the complexity of its data center infrastructure, the organization hosts an array of in-house applications, from human resource management to cooling system maintenance. Some of these apps draw a continuous daily load, while others are periodical. Some resided in the physical environment while others were virtual.

This dispersed, disparate infrastructure deprived the IT team the agility to scale and deliver its many in-house applications and resources quickly to business users, resulting in frequent downtime of critical apps during peak periods.

"We had no visibility across our infrastructure and environment. We had no redundancy and no load balancing," says Maniruzzaman Chowdhury, senior assistant general manager, IT, MGI.

"Every month-end was particularly stressful. Imagine having to pay the salaries of 35,000 employees when it was impossible to scale up resources for the human resources management application."

Any attempt to shift resources to the human resources management app also impacted the performance of other apps during the same period, such as those used to pay the 6,000 distributors and 15,000 suppliers.

Deploy and provision from a single pane

MGI secured a license in 2015 to set up the first private economic zone in Bangladesh, an initiative designed to meet the country's growing demand for consumer products and industrial raw materials. This gave the conglomerate the opportunity to rebuild an IT hub for the business, so that all user traffic would go through the data center of the economic zone.

Having worked with VMware partner Omega Exim on other projects, MGI invited the company to support the development of this new IT hub.

"The Omega Exim engineers are very experienced and proactive. They always try to deliver on time, and we find that they truly do care about the customer," said Chowdhury.

Omega Exim proposed two VMware solutions to help MGI centrally manage and gain complete visibility of all its infrastructure and in-house applications: VMware vCloud Suite Advanced and VMware NSX Data Center. By virtualizing its servers, MGI reduced its hardware, operating and staffing costs while at the same time gaining the ability to deploy applications faster. With NSX Data Center, MGI can now ensure their high-volume applications are always available during the busy season. And with data center traffic secured across all workloads, the organization enjoys greater agility to respond to business demands without compromising compliance and control.

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"We recommended VMware vCloud Suite to help MGI quickly deliver infrastructure and applications across environments. By pairing it with NSX Data Center, MGI can manage the provisioning, deployment, operations and retirement of networking and security infrastructure and applications from a central control pane," says Abdullah Begh, director, Omega Exim.

Initially, MGI explored a similar solution from Cisco—the Application Centric Infrastructure (ACI)—which would have required the acquisition of Cisco hardware.

"We decided on VMware, as there's no hardware lock-in issue and we can use any server or networking hardware, even the ones we already had," says Chowdhury.

The project deployment was carried out in partnership with VMware Professional Services. Omega Exim completed 80 percent of the implementation while Professional Services managed the remaining 20 percent to ensure a smooth handover.
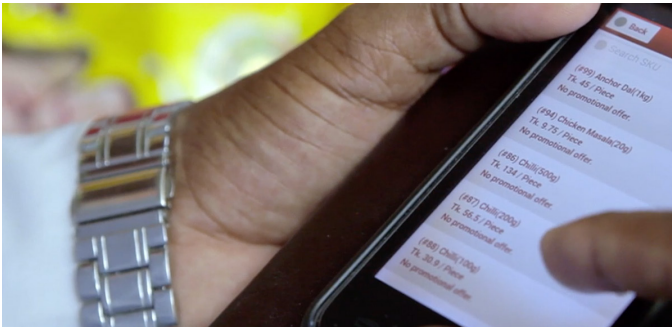
Omega Exim also continued to help MGI make adjustments to the solutions during a three-month transition period after implementation.

"Our engineers have all the required certificates, such as VMware Master Service Competencies, so we can do these changes in-house," says Begh.

High availability for apps

One of the immediate benefits to MGI of deploying VMware vCloud Suite was the reduction of physical hardware, from 50 to 12 bare-metal servers, slashing hardware and operating costs. It was also able to optimize and reclaim capacity with vRealize. And since the 12 servers can be maintained by a single engineer, MGI also saves on personnel costs.

While virtualization of compute reduced the cost of IT, it increased infrastructure efficiency. Instead of requiring three to four months to purchase a physical server to roll out an application, the company now accomplishes the same task in four to five hours.

"We've saved so much time now, which is crucial in a quickly expanding business," says Chowdhury. "And once the app is deployed, we have complete visibility into the infrastructure's performance and capacity, and this single dashboard is extremely helpful for the IT team."

NSX Data Center eases many of the headaches of busy peak periods. By distributing network traffic load among multiple servers, the load-balancing capability in NSX Data Center ensures application high availability, providing optimal user experience, all with zero disruptions even during their month-end, high seasons. The conglomerate also relies on vRealize® Network Insight™ for end-to-end network visibility, micro-segmentation planning and optimization.

Moreover NSX Data Center provides an additional layer of security beyond what traditional firewalls can offer.

"As such a big company, security is paramount. NSX Data Center secures the data center traffic across all our workloads so we can have superior protection," Chowdhury says.

At the Meghna Economic Zone, MGI provides necessary utilities such as electricity, natural gas and underground water. At points of high demand, it can now offer data center services to its investors or customers by leveraging the multi-tenancy and metering capabilities in VMware vRealize® Operations™ within the vCloud Suite.

"Because of VMware and Omega Exim, we can now deliver agility without compromising compliance and control," he says. "We are proof that with VMware solutions, we can deliver scalable IT services to meet business demand and respond to market changes quickly."

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Supporting remote work

The next step on the MGI transformation journey is to improve the management of their branch offices and their support for remote employees, especially with uncertainties posed by COVID-19. Omega Exim has proposed VMware SD-WAN, so that MGI can provision its more than 100 offices with automated zero-touch deployment.

The conglomerate is also testing VMware Horizon® and VMware Workspace ONE® to onboard new employees, and to explore the possibility to provide current employees with thin-client devices. With its large workforce, MGI can reduce operating expenses significantly.

"We have been very satisfied with VMware solutions so far," says Chowdhury. "And we're happy to continue exploring other VMware solutions for our journey."