Hyperconvergence offers IDEWE optimal user experience

The health and wellbeing of employees at its customers, that's what it is all about for IDEWE. These days, even a thoroughly warm and human activity like this undergoes a digital transformation. IDEWE offers ever more digital tools to support its customers. This impacts the way the IT department works. That's why IDEWE recently decided to start the future now by investing in HyperConverged Infrastructure (HCI).

"IT is key to the kind of organization IDEWE is," confirms **David Vanneck**, ICT Infrastructure and Services Manager at Groep IDEWE. "In the last four years we've noted a sharp increase in the number of digital transactions with customers." IDEWE's 35,000 customers range from SMEs with just a handful of staff to multinationals with over 40,000 employees. These customers can access a broad portfolio of digital tools through a customer portal. To create reports or flick through documentation. But changing laws and regulations require IDEWE to deliver all kinds of information to its customers, which is increasing the number of interactions in the client zone.

Performance and Scalability through HCI
In order to offer both internal and external users the best possible user experience, IDEWE relies on a robust infrastructure. Over the last eight years, IDEWE undertook two major infrastructure refreshes that applied mainly to virtualization, standardization and greater flexibility. "The growing demand for performance and scalability made us feel like we were constantly playing catch-up," said Vanneck. "Usually, the 'sizing' of an environment was already outdated by the time we implemented it. We wanted to stay ahead of the demand curve, so that our infrastructure would not become a bottleneck."

With the infrastructure refresh in 2015, HCI was already taken into consideration as a solution, but standardization was not yet well advanced enough to take that step. "We are a relatively small team. By standardizing our infrastructure and processes to the max, we can focus on adding value instead of having to

worry about the underlying foundations," said Vanneck. "We prefer 'plug&play' components; they allow us to focus on the application that can differentiate our organization from the rest. HCI makes us more efficient. When compute, storage and networking are procured from different vendors, you lose a lot of time troubleshooting to pinpoint the problem."

Comparing offerings
By 2019 IDEWE had abandoned enough legacy systems to consider switching to HCI. To decide on which solutions best fitted IDEWE, Simac organized a series of workshops with the IDEWE systems engineers, comparing the different HCI systems available in the market. "These workshops were illuminating," Vanneck recalled. "Simac has good insights into the strengths and weaknesses of the various solutions. They have extensive expertise in the portfolio they offer and have hands-on experience. From these workshops it became very clear that they have a good command of this technology and its potential."

> *"NetApp HCI was the perfect solution to our increasing need for scalable performance."*
>
> David Vanneck
> ICT INFRASTRUCTURE AND SERVICES MANAGER − GROEP IDEWE

NetApp HCI delivers reliable Quality of Service

In the end they opted for NetApp HCI. A number of factors led to that decision, such as the independence between storage and compute, so they can scale separately, and the perfect integration with the existing NetApp environment. Jan Verhaert, ICT system engineer at Groep IDEWE, praises the reliable Quality of Service: "we work with a limited number of physical servers, but we are running multiple applications and databases on them. We want to avoid that issues in one environment also impact other applications. Our previous infrastructure had trouble guaranteeing that. The functionality of controlling this on the storage level also, was key in making our decision." Among the other factors influencing the buying decision were the easy integration with vCenter and the fact that NetApp remains a very open system towards other solutions.

Backup with Veeam

An example of this openness is the integration with Veeam for backup and disaster recovery. "On a granular and functional level, Veeam offers us plenty of new possibilities. It is now extremely easy to make a snapshot, extract a backup from that snapshot and save it to a backup platform. The environment is very easy to use, which allows us to focus on backup and restore without having to take technical implementations into account. It was really a bonus for us that Simac has experience both with NetApp and Veeam."
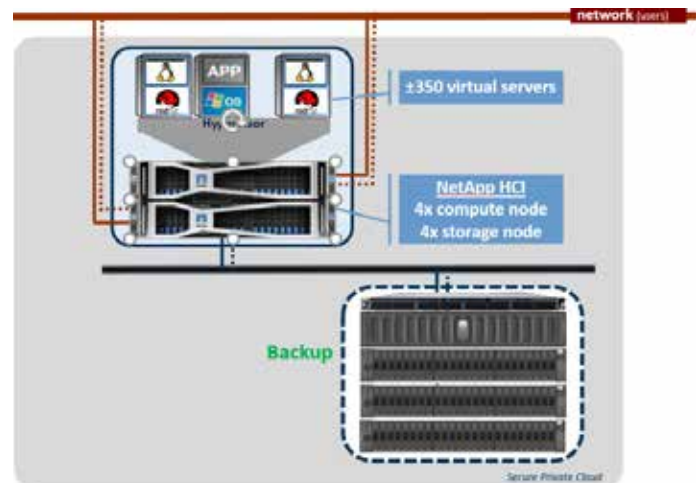
Smooth migration

The actual migration to NetApp HCI was very smooth. "We were positively surprised by how smooth everything happens," said Verhaert. "This can be attributed, in large part, to Simac's thorough preparation." The migration was prepared in the summer of 2019, and the development and test environment were migrated first. The production environments were migrated gradually and with minimal disruption in September and October.

IDEWE is very positive about the collaboration with Simac. "Their project management is always excellent. They also have a lot of experience with the diverse components of our infrastructure, which allows them to propose solutions rapidly." Vanneck also praises the flexibility of the IT service provider. "When changes are needed, they handle these smoothly. That's not the case with all service providers, I can assure you. It's aspects like this that create added value for us."

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