



The Chambre des Métiers can expand its services more easily

ENTERPRISE

The Chambre des Métiers (CDM) is the public organization that protects the socio-economic interests of more than 5,500 SMEs in the trades and crafts sector, which together employ more than 72,000 people. These form an important part of the Luxembourg economy, accounting for one-fifth of the total employment.

ADVANTAGES

- More manageable, simple management
- Can be expanded gradually
- Strong integration with VMware
- 100% virtualized servers and networks

Challenge

The Chambre des Métiers wants to develop more of its own software applications for internal and external use. It was looking for a more powerful architecture that could support this goal and be managed by as small a team as possible – one that could do more with less.

Solution

The most suitable solution for keeping the maintenance tasks to a minimum proved to be Cisco UCS blade servers with their integrated network components. The time that the IT staff of the CDM save on maintenance in this way can be spent on developing new software applications and virtualization of the desktops.

The Chambre des Métiers (CDM) is supplying more and more services to its members. To keep these services automated and running smoothly, it has to develop additional software applications. The organization has been developing applications for internal use for years, but now the CDM wants to offer more applications to its customers, such as its members or third-party organizations.

"We developed our own CRM application, among other things. We are also going to implement a new accounting application and an application for document management and scanning. One of the first projects to be realized involved the integrated management of on-site installations of heating systems. Soon we are going to start with an application to simplify the administration and payment for our range of continuing education courses. We could not carry on developing with our previous server systems – the capacity was no longer adequate," says Jean-Yves Kayser, project manager and IT engineer at the Chambre des Métiers. "To keep the management to a minimum and still have sufficient capacity and flexibility, we decided to change to a system with blade servers based on VMware."

Not the standard choice

The CDM initially wanted to limit its choice to two standard hardware suppliers. "At that time, we weren't so familiar with Cisco's servers. In the beginning Cisco was an outsider compared to the other two candidates," says Kayser. "We did already have switches from Cisco and a firewall. That is the reason our regular IT supplier Simac proposed we evaluate Cisco's blade servers anyway, after we discovered the systems at a presentation. That is where we saw that Cisco uses the same philosophy for its Unified Computing System as



As for the IT projects that are running now, previously we would not have been able to manage them with five people. So I would choose Cisco UCS again right away

Jean-Yves Kayser, project manager and IT engineer at the Chambre des Métiers

VMware, which we have already been working with for three years and which we are very pleased with."

Shortly afterwards, the CDM itself was able to set up a simulated configuration of a UCS blade server in Cisco's technical lab in Luxembourg. "The simplicity with which we could configure everything was really powerful. We were able to test the system ourselves, so we got a good idea of where we stood," says Kayser. "During the technical presentation it also emerged that the network was the one that was best integrated, that the maintenance licences would be a lot more advantageous and that the management was simpler. Moreover, Cisco



and Simac did not try to sell additional things. For instance, another supplier would have liked to offer a management console, but this was really too powerful. And another standard server supplier insisted on offering its storage systems as well, but we did not need these either.”

For desktop virtualization too

The IT infrastructure of the CDM today is fully virtualized after the replacement of all the servers by five blades. Two of these are reserved for desktop virtualization with VMware View. The CDM’s 60 staff, along with the personnel from the other businesses located in the CDM premises, will be able to benefit from the new architecture in the long term. The combination of Cisco UCS and VMware View ensures that all data are centralized and better protected and that the desktop management is simpler.

A first in Luxembourg

Jean-Yves Kayser : “We are the first in Luxembourg and among the first in the Benelux to start using Cisco UCS. We took a certain risk in doing this, but because it was a first both Cisco and Simac were present for the installation. In this way, Simac was able to sharpen its skills through the contact with the staff from Cisco. We are very pleased with our partner Simac. They supplied powerful systems at the right price. We ourselves have a very limited IT team, so we have to call in external help on a regular basis. And this is an area in which Simac is very close to small and medium-sized organizations.”

The modular structure of the Cisco UCS is another plus point for the CDM. If more memory or capacity is needed in the future, then this can be achieved with relatively small budgets that require a shorter internal approval process.

Installation in a day

The CDM had allowed four days for the installation of the new systems. However, everything was ready in one day. Jean-Yves Kayser: “The speed with which Cisco installed everything really amazed me. It was incredible to see how easy it all went. There is a huge range of possibilities for integration with the network and the configuration takes place via drag and drop.”

With the installation of Cisco UCS, the CDM is now ready to set up a secure cloud. “We are still at the concept stage, but it is possible that we will set up a private cloud between us and a number of ministries. With the systems that we now have in house, this will require relatively little effort. For example, we are working on a one-stop shop for people who want to set up a company. At the moment there are still too many data being entered twice, by us and by other Luxembourg institutions. Thanks to secure Internet applications, we can make great progress in this area.”

For those who really want to go for virtualization

The power consumption is also reduced. Kayser: “The five blades use less power than the ‘pizza box’ systems from before.” Moreover, the CDM will soon disconnect its two distribution layer switches because the backbone switch of the Cisco UCS will take over this task. This will also simplify the management and further reduce energy consumption.

“As for the IT projects that are running now, previously we would not have been able to manage them with five people. So I would choose Cisco UCS again right away,” concludes Jean-Yves Kayser. “To me it’s clear: if you really want to go for virtualization, then you have to go for the Unified Computing System from Cisco.”