



Somersford Associates

The real benefits of virtualization uncovered

Information Technology | Secure Application Access & Extranet Security | AppGate

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Jovan Milosevic
IT Manager
Somersford Associates



Background

As IT budgets are being tightened even further, more and more companies are considering virtualizing some aspect of their network in order to cut costs and improve flexibility. Network security consultants Somersford Associates have taken the bold step of moving their whole corporate network to a virtual environment.

As users of Cryptzone's AppGate access control solution, Somersford was encouraged to take action when AppGate redesigned their technology to run on a virtual platform. However, rather than upgrading just the AppGate server, Somersford chose to virtualize the whole network to really understand the challenges of virtualization, and to assess whether the benefits meet expectations.

Requirements

Jovan Milosevic, Somersford's IT manager, lead the project to replace the old multi-appliance network with the virtualized architecture. The primary objectives included:

Cost reduction: savings on hardware and software and also on other elements such as LAN infrastructure requirements.

Network security: ensuring the AppGate solution continued to protect resources on the new virtual network while also providing a flexible working environment for Somersford's consultants.

Improved disaster recovery solution: creating a low cost, flexible solution to ensure high availability.

Solution

All data and applications are now running on separate VMware servers hosted on a single machine with Linux operating system.

Most programs, such as the CRM system and AppGate solution, were straightforward to move to a virtual server. However the mail server had some limitations running under Linux and was replaced with Postfix. SquirrelMail was also installed providing a webmail service Somersford didn't have previously.

The AppGate solution is able to control user access to data and applications irrespective of whether they are hosted on physical or virtual servers. Somersford's policy is to use the AppGate security server to control all user access to the network – so all users, even when working in the office, are treated as remote workers and access the data and applications they need through AppGate. To increase flexibility and reduce infrastructure costs in the office, a wireless access point connects users directly to the AppGate security server. When working at home or customer site, consultants can use any device including home PC's, laptops and mobile phones to connect over the internet.

Benefits

Cost savings: Reduced costs, for instance in terms of purchasing fewer servers, will be realized in the longer term. The immediate benefit of virtualization has been the ability to deliver more services to the business with the resources available eg. new applications such as webmail and request tracking system, and a new DR solution (see below), have been deployed without having to buy new hardware.

Somersford Associates are specialists in network security in the challenging area of identity and access management. As early adopters themselves of some of the leading edge security technologies in the market, Somersford's

consultants are able to provide customers with innovative solutions that protect corporate assets and resources whilst also ensuring that staff, customers and suppliers can all be productive.



"Going forward it's going to be a lot easier to do software and hardware upgrades. To upgrade application servers I can simply create a test environment and install the upgraded software. Upgrading the hardware will also be incredibly quick – create a VMware environment on the new server and move the virtual servers to the new box."

Jovan Milosevic
IT Manager
Sommerford Associates



Low Cost DR Solution: Virtualizing the network freed-up one of the old physical servers, providing a suitable platform for a high availability solution. This spare box, installed at a different location, contains another virtual AppGate security server and a copy of the data and applications on the primary server. The backup system is configured to automatically login to the AppGate in the office each day using PK authentication and synchronize the two servers. If the office network is not available for whatever reason, it is very simple for users to connect to the backup server.

Efficiency and Productivity: AppGate's new file access component makes it much quicker and easier for users to access their files on the network. This, and the move to Linux, has significantly improved system performance and overall productivity. "The combination of Linux and AppGate's file access means everything is quicker", says Milosevic. "Linux is quicker and more reliable and file access is now ridiculously quick."

Security: The AppGate solution combines strong authentication and authorization together with powerful rights management

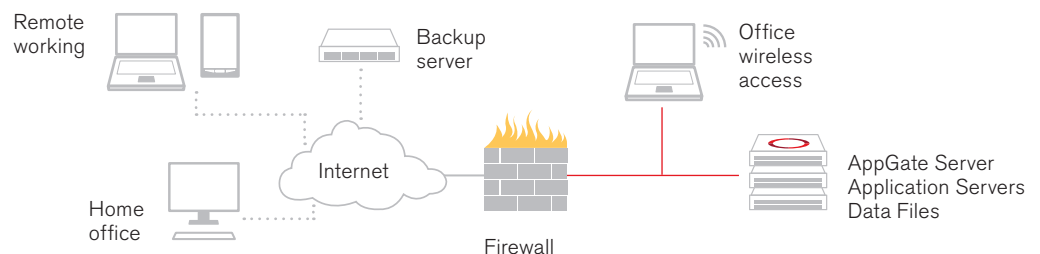
functionality. Administrators can define precisely who can connect, from what device and what level of access they are permitted to resources on both physical and virtual servers. With AppGate controlling user access, Sommerford's network continues to be secure in the virtual environment.

Flexibility and Scalability: As the needs of the organization change in the future, upgrading the system or even moving the whole network to a different location will be much simpler and quicker. "Going forward it's going to be a lot easier to do software and hardware upgrades", says Milosevic. "To upgrade application servers I can simply create a test environment and install the upgraded software."

Easy administration: The AppGate server can be remotely managed, making system support quick and easy: "VMware is very easy to support. It takes no more than 30 minutes to restart the system if there's a problem, and with AppGate's external access we don't have to be onsite to do it. This means I can respond quickly to issues from any location, and more of my time can be spent supporting our customers."

Secure Access Control for Virtual Networks

- AppGate's Security Server is now based on Open Solaris making it easy to run on a virtual platform.
- The AppGate Free Edition (AFE) is a fully functional AppGate Security Server that is free to download. For a zero cost solution it is easy to install on a VMware or VirtualBox server and the free AFE license provides secure access control for up to 20 concurrent users.
- Organizations requiring access for more users can purchase the Professional License, which also provides full technical support.
- The new file access component makes it possible for users to access files from any platform very easily without the need for preinstalled software on the device.
- The file access component also helps to prevent the spread of file based viruses by effectively isolating devices during file sharing.



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Cryptzone solutions mitigate information security risks in the key areas of Policy Compliance, Content Security, Secure Access and Endpoint Security.

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