

Sullivan Group Uses Marathon and Citrix to Get Flexible, Reliable Availability for Critical Applications

PROFILE

The Sullivan Group

ENVIRONMENT

Citrix XenServer™
Marathon everRun® VM

WINDOWS APPLICATION

Microsoft SQL Server
Microsoft Dynamics
SamWare

THE COMPANY

Based in Savannah, Georgia, [The Sullivan Group](#) is a Human Resources Outsourcing (HRO) company focused on supporting small and medium-sized businesses (SMBs). Serving hundreds of small businesses in Georgia and South Carolina, The Sullivan Group provides each customer with the critical support and expert resources needed for a wide range of HR challenges including employee benefits, payroll, compliance tactics, staffing, and workers compensation insurance.

THE SITUATION

In early 2008, The Sullivan Group's IT department began the process of overhauling its IT infrastructure. Led by Network Administrator Erika Simpson, the first phase of the update was to roll out a new Microsoft Dynamics-based software solution, SamWare, that provides critical business functions including human resources, payroll, financial management and compliance reporting.

In conjunction with implementing SamWare, the IT team also wanted to adopt server virtualization technology in order to simplify its data center, consolidate hardware and reduce the company's environmental footprint. Server virtualization would also provide the company with high availability and disaster recovery benefits to ensure the safety and availability of critical business data.

"Another benefit and driving force behind adopting server virtualization was the expansion of our disaster recovery plan," said Erika Simpson, Network Administrator, The Sullivan Group. "With our business located on the coast in Savannah, GA, we are always planning for hurricanes, storms and floods throughout the year which can threaten the integrity of data stored and managed in an unprotected data center. It is critical that our clients and their employees have continuous access to their necessary human resources documents including payroll

MARATHON

Run to Infinity

Success Story

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information, tax filings and medical benefits to avoid compliance penalties. Many of these documents are irreplaceable, and we needed a solution that would provide us with the utmost protection of our clients' critical data."

THE SOLUTION

For The Sullivan Group's new infrastructure, Simpson turned to Citrix, a global leader in application delivery infrastructure. Citrix XenServer virtualization solution proved to be the most attractive option for the company due to its open source ecosystem combined with the fact that the platform is fully integrated with automated high availability software from Marathon Technologies, a high-availability solutions provider based in Massachusetts.

Marathon's [everRun® VM](#) delivers reliable protection for critical virtual workloads by providing redundant virtual machines and synchronized mirroring of the entire system including network, applications and data. The integration of Citrix XenServer "bare-metal" performance and everRun VM's unique software fault-tolerant architecture provides companies like The Sullivan Group with the security to run business critical and other high-value applications in virtual environments.

Simpson was pleased that the tight integration of XenServer and everRun VM allowed for an easy implementation.

"We were surprised with the ease of implementation. We were set up with the software within a week's time

and haven't had any obstacles since; it's up and running flawlessly."

THE RESULTS

Since implementing Citrix XenServer and Marathon's everRun VM, which The Sullivan Group is now leveraging to protect their Microsoft SQL and SamWare applications, the company has had zero-downtime, even during a significant failure.

"We experienced a hardware failure about two weeks after installing everRun VM where the entire server went down, but we never knew it occurred because of Marathon's everRun VM technology. Marathon ensured there was an uninterrupted end user experience in spite of component failures. Keeping our systems up and running at all times will allow us to provide superior customer service to our clients and gives us a significant competitive advantage in the HRO market," added Simpson.

After realizing the data protection benefits of running two of its critical applications in its new server virtualization environment, The Sullivan Group has plans to expand its use of virtualization. By early 2009, the company plans to migrate five more applications from their physical environment to their virtual environments with the confidence that customers' data will be up, running and available at all times.

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