

Case Study

CA

"At first we were hesitant to pay a consulting company, but now we feel it's the best money we have allocated from our budget. Citrix is not something that can simply be installed and set up - it's a process for which we needed outside Citrix expertise. We have found that Covisia Solutions surpasses our previous support firm in expertise and by giving us personal attention while having an in-depth understanding of our environment."

Jason Graff, Senior Consultant for CA

"I appreciate all your guys' support. You have totally exceeded my expectations of the support I thought we would get."

Michael Belli, Senior Director, CA

THE CHALLENGE

A three-person IT department at CA that focuses on supporting a sales-support application recently needed outside expertise to help support two Citrix server farms (one in North America and one in the UK) comprised of three servers and three appliances each. The department deployed the two server farms on its own to provision a pre-sales application used by the field sales team to give product demonstrations to prospects.

The application is accessed by CA employees around the world. CA has packaged demos in form of VMware sessions and might have one session or as many as seven open at one time that together add up to one demo. All of the sessions are accessed via CA's private Citrix server farms that allow sales personnel to tap into the pre-sales application from a prospect's office over the Internet. This allows the sales team to easily give product demonstrations that play a crucial role in the sales process.

As CA planned to put the new server farm in the UK into production, the company realized it needed help building and supporting a more robust and reliable Citrix solution that would remain stable and perform properly. "The reliability of the VMware-Citrix combo is important because if something breaks, we can't start another session immediately, and that hampers our sales efforts," said Jason Graff, a Senior Consultant for CA. "We had struggled with the performance and the reliability for the Citrix solution for almost two years."

To improve the situation, CA initially considered an outside solution provider, but at the time the cost could not be justified. But as CA realized the complexity of its Citrix environment and considered adding the server farm in Europe, the company knew it needed extra help. The final straw was when CA had a performance issue that took an entire night to resolve.

"We needed a roadmap of our environment and felt the Citrix farms were not configured properly to give us maximum bandwidth," Graff said. "The solution worked well at times, but we felt it could be better and more consistent. After the all-night issue, we knew we needed an outside resource that offered Citrix expertise and 24x7 support."

Key Benefits - Covisia Solutions' Support Services for Citrix Server Farm

- Improved architecture configuration allows field sales to access landing page faster and receive faster connection speeds throughout product demonstrations.
- Enhanced failover capabilities allow CA to take presentation server, Web interface or gateway offline for testing without impacting end users.
- Advanced 24x7 Citrix support provides peace-of-mind during weekends and when IT management is on vacation.

THE SOLUTION

When CA researched the cost of 24x7 Citrix coverage from the first vendor it considered, the company realized it needed another, more cost-effective alternative. "Fortunately, another department within CA had just utilized Covisia Solutions for the deployment of a Citrix farm to support an SAP application," Graff said. "Based on how well Covisia performed on that deployment, we knew we could rely on them for support of our system. We then researched their pricing, which turned out to be very favorable compared to other cost estimates we secured."

Graff also appreciated that Covisia would dedicate two systems engineers to the CA account. "It makes a big difference when you don't have to interact with a new person unfamiliar with your environment every time you call," Graff said.

In addition to offering on-going support, Covisia analyzed the CA environment to determine exactly what CA needed to achieve proper high-availability and failover capabilities. "Getting this type of information from our previous support vendor would have been next to impossible under our service plan, or we would have had to pay a lot more to get it," Graff said. "But Covisia has the knowledge to provide this information efficiently, which helps keep the cost down, and they proactively provide as much help as they can."

Once Graff started working with Covisia, he became convinced the solutions provider was the right choice. "We did not consider researching for another consulting firm at that point," Graff said. "Because Covisia had taken care of the SAP deployment, and because of how much they impressed us in our initial meetings, we knew they were the right partner for us."

To start the support process, Covisia analyzed and documented the CA Citrix environments. On a quarterly basis, Covisia examines all of the Citrix servers and devices to make sure they have the most up-to-date patches.

"When we went live with our European Citrix farm, they provided us with a map showing every component," Graff added. "To get this from our previous support vendor would have cost a full week's worth of services. But Covisia charges by the day and completes tasks like this fast, which is much more cost effective."

THE BENEFITS

"We're in much better shape using Covisia Solutions for support because they already have a map of our architecture both in North America and the UK," Graff said. "More importantly, their support personnel already know our architecture – so we don't have to spend an hour explaining our design and why we created it the way we did."

Before working with Covisia Solutions, Graff was always anxious about weekends and vacations. If problems occurred, it often meant a lost night or weekend. "But Covisia has set things up so we now have a properly-functioning failover system," said Graff. "If we have to make a change, we can easily set things up to go through another appliance and Web interface."

Graff also emphasized how Covisia goes beyond the services stipulated in the monthly contract. "In addition to the support that Covisia provides, they also offer extra consulting when necessary. When we need help, it does not feel like we are on our own if escalation is needed. Covisia automatically gives our situations extra attention, and if something needs to be escalated to Citrix, they intervene and take care of it. We don't have to worry about getting cut-off at a particular time of day because Covisia works for us around the clock and is very responsive."

In addition to general support, Covisia also helped CA configure the Citrix farms properly. "They helped us tweak the system so that field sales reps can access the demonstration landing-page faster, and the connection speed is faster throughout the demonstrations," Graff said. "The improved performance helps our sales efforts – all because Covisia spotted a change that we should consider." Graff added that when it comes to consulting on Citrix, Covisia doesn't guess or offer impractical suggestions. "They don't suggest an expensive test environment to test issues," Graff said. "They work as well as they can with what we have."

In Summary

As one of the world's leading technology companies, CA supports many of its IT systems with internal resources. But when it comes to deploying and supporting Citrix solutions, the software giant realizes that solution providers with specific expertise in Citrix make a big difference in how well Citrix systems at CA perform. "We are a three-man department with a focus on supporting a specific sales-support application," Graff said. "It helps immensely to rely on an outside source with specific Citrix expertise such as Covisia Solutions. Since they tweaked our Citrix architecture, we have had zero down time with the critical sales demonstration application."