



"I was shocked. We didn't have to do anything. As soon as we started the process it just ran. The next day it sent me an email notification that it had finished. Within ten minutes of receiving the notification that machine was up and running in its new life. It's been running perfectly ever since."

Thomas Breakiron, Network Engineer, Cross IT

Business Profile

Company Name:
Cross IT Services and Solutions, LLC.

Headquarters:
Greenville, Pennsylvania, USA

Industry:
Computer Consulting

Business Environment:

- Computer consulting and support
- Works in a variety of system environments
- Efficiency impacts profitability and customer satisfaction

Vision Solutions Product:
Double-Take Move

Implementation Team:
Vision Solutions
Cross IT

Critical issue

Computer consultants usually face a different system environment at every client. Worse, those configurations aren't always fully documented. Consultants' tools must, therefore, be highly flexible and easily adapted to any environment, even highly customized ones.

Server migrations and system upgrades are two of the many tasks that Cross IT performs for its clients. Doing this in a complicated computing environment that lacks complete documentation can be problematic. Consequently, Cross IT needed a data migration tool that allowed it to perform the task quickly and cost-effectively in an unlimited number of different environments.

Results

- Migrated a server in a complex, unique environment
- Performed the work with a fraction of the labor and time otherwise required
- Completed the job quickly and efficiently with minimal manual intervention

Technologies

- Double-Take Move
- Dell servers
- Windows 2008 R2
- VMware

Business Challenge

Cross IT is a privately owned, computer consulting company with sixteen full-time employees, including network engineers, database engineers, technicians and support staff. Originating as an IT department spun off from Reynolds Services and merged with assets acquired from an established cross-platform computer integration specialist, Cross IT now serves a wide range of customers, with a particular focus on the education, business and government sectors in Western Pennsylvania, Eastern Ohio and Upstate New York.

When Tom Breakiron, a consultant with Cross IT, begins working for a new client one of the biggest challenges he faces is incomplete documentation on the client's server configuration. In one instance where he needed to migrate a K-12 education client to an upgraded server, the challenge was heightened by the fact that the client tried to do the migration on its own without a clear understanding of the task or well-defined migration plans.

Other obstacles further impeded the completion of the task. For example, there were volume format problems, volume size problems, and data location issues, among others.

Increasing the challenge, the client had almost 10 terabytes of storage, with about 80 percent utilization. In addition, 3,000 to 4,000 people accessed these servers and if anything went wrong with the migration, Breakiron would have felt the heat immediately.



When Breakiron arrived, the client had already migrated from a physical server to a more powerful VMware virtual environment, but a virtual-to-virtual migration still had to be done. VMware offers a migration tool, but it had a file limitation of about two terabytes. Because all of the client's storage volumes were larger than two terabytes, and one was larger than five, Breakiron needed another tool to automate the migration.

Solution

After several hours of searching, Breakiron found a low-cost tool that was flexible enough to fulfill the client's needs. Double-Take Move migrates physical or virtual workloads—from simple file servers to custom application servers and domain controllers—while users remain active, with little or no downtime.

Due to the complexity and uniqueness of the client's environment, Double-Take Move didn't run at first. A call to Vision's Customer Care line rapidly resolved the problem.

"The person who answered the phone was a professional IT guy, not someone sitting in a random cube overseas," explained Breakiron. "He knew what he was talking about and immediately knew exactly what needed to be done. It wasn't a defect with the product, but rather a consequence of the uniqueness of the environment. It was one of the best tech support experiences I've had, and I've been at this for a long time."

A slightly different version of Double-Take Move solved the problem. Because Vision didn't have an installer for that version, the Customer Care representative quickly helped to assemble a custom instance of the application on the client's server.

That version worked flawlessly. Double-Take Move completed the migration while Breakiron went home for the night. The next day, the software sent an email notification that the job was done. Ten minutes later, the server was ready for use.

Breakiron estimated that performing the migration manually would have taken him a few weeks of painful late nights and weekends, at considerable expense to the customer. At time of writing, the migration was a few months in the past. Users would certainly have noticed if there had been any problems, but the new server has been working perfectly ever since.

"The server migration was a really, really, really big problem," said Breakiron. "Prior to getting Double-Take Move there wasn't much hope of getting it done within the time I had, but the problem was completely avoided and nobody even had the slightest clue that there was ever a problem."



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