



Make-A-Wish®

INDUSTRY
NONPROFIT

LOCATION
PHOENIX, ARIZONA

KEY CHALLENGES

- Improve reliability, throughput, and responsiveness
- Streamline disparate IT systems into a centralized cloud infrastructure
- Increase employee productivity to accelerate wish granting

SOLUTION

The Centralized Technology Services project leverages VMware vSphere® to standardize the IT infrastructure for all North American chapters and enable cloud services for the Phoenix headquarters. The foundation also uses VMware vCloud Director® and VMware NSX® Data Center.

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Safeguards sensitive data and standardizes more secure access across all Make-A-Wish chapters
- Streamlines management, operations, and security throughout the organization
- Provides greater flexibility in choosing cloud solutions and reduces costs via the multi-cloud environment
- Provides the flexibility to easily manage Make-A-Wish data center operations as well as its cloud infrastructure via the hybrid cloud environment

Make-A-Wish® Moves to the Cloud to Grant Wishes Faster

The Make-A-Wish vision is to grant the wish of every eligible child. One way to meet this is to accelerate business processes and enable chapters to be more productive. The foundation's strategic vision, along with a high-profile website crash, led Make-A-Wish to centralize IT operations on VMware Cloud™ infrastructure delivered by PhoenixNAP, a global IT service provider and VMware Cloud Provider partner. With VMware, Make-A-Wish now provides access to the same data across all chapters in real time, reducing the time required to make wishes come true.

Founded in 1980, the mission of Make-A-Wish is to create life-changing wishes for children with critical illnesses. Headquartered in Phoenix, Make-A-Wish has 60 chapters and 110 locations across the country, and tens of thousands of volunteers, donors, and supporters. On average, the organization grants a wish every 34 minutes.

The challenge

In October 2015, Make-A-Wish America was featured on the CBS show, *60 Minutes*. The segment caused a traffic surge that crashed Make-A-Wish websites, making it difficult for inspired viewers to contribute to the nonprofit. Donations are the organization's lifeblood, and its websites are a huge channel for receiving donations.

To improve reliability, throughput, and responsiveness—and help prevent such crashes from happening again—the organization's leadership decided a modern data infrastructure was needed.

A main challenge to accomplishing this is that 60 Make-A-Wish U.S. chapters, as well as its international affiliates, operate as separate entities with their own cloud and IT infrastructures, making an organization-wide digital transformation difficult. And like many nonprofits, Make-A-Wish was constrained by limited budgets and staffing.

The organization's vision to grant the wish of every eligible child adds to the pressure. Currently, it has the resources to grant only half of the eligible children's wishes. "We need to enable our vision through everything we do," says Bipin Jayaraj, CIO for Make-A-Wish America. "We need to use technology to accelerate business processes and enable chapters to be even more productive."

The solution

In addition to its Phoenix-based data center, Make-A-Wish was already leveraging the reliability and ease of management of a private cloud based on VMware vSphere. However, the organization's IT team wanted to take it further, so they could spend even more time granting wishes and less time running an IT infrastructure.

With that in mind, the IT team created an enterprise-wide project called Centralized Technology Services, which standardized the IT infrastructure for all U.S. chapters and enabled cloud services for the national headquarters. To standardize its IT infrastructure, Make-A-Wish adopted the VMware Cloud Provider™ Platform to power its hybrid cloud infrastructure approach with the help of PhoenixNAP, a VMware Cloud Verified Partner and premier member of the VMware Cloud Provider Program.

Their hybrid cloud infrastructure includes VMware vCloud Director, which gives the team multitenant capabilities for greater efficiency and role-based access to a web-based management console. With the console, IT team members can interact with the organization's resources, enabling them to create and work with vSphere vApps™ and virtual machines. The Make-A-Wish IT infrastructure also uses VMware NSX Data Center as its network virtualization and security platform.

"With VMware, we're bringing together our headquarters team and all 60 chapters in the U.S. in a seamless, uniform, flexible, cloud-based platform that more securely consolidates all the organization's data," says Jayaraj. "We've translated our organizational vision into an IT imperative."

Business results and benefits

Security is a top concern at Make-A-Wish. NSX Data Center provides the organization with application-centric security at the workload level, as well as delivers networking and security consistency to streamline the organization's multi-cloud operations. With NSX Data Center, all the organization's sensitive data—on donors as well as the children whose wishes are granted—are highly secure.

"In an organization like ours, where there's a social cause, it's extremely important to safeguard our data, especially with all the high-profile breaches that people hear about in the news today," says Jayaraj. "In terms of cloud security, no other technology tops VMware."

Make-A-Wish uses vSphere Remote Office and Branch Office™ (ROBO) to extend its Active Directory and domain more securely to all 110 physical locations. "vSphere ROBO is helping us centralize the security of our IT operations," Jayaraj notes.

VMware Cloud helps Make-A-Wish streamline the management, operations, and security of applications across its multiple chapters and their clouds. In turn, these cloud-based services give the foundation the agility to make more wishes come true, faster.

"Our IT teams work with medical eligibility providers, volunteers, celebrities, and others who help grant a child's wish," says Jayaraj. "Having centralized technology services in the VMware Cloud infrastructure enables us to provide ubiquitous access to the same data across all our chapters in real time. We now have a level playing field across the enterprise, and it's helping us reduce the time it takes to make wishes come true."

Centralizing various Make-A-Wish chapter IT operations with vSphere also gives the foundation a seamless hybrid cloud experience with simple and efficient management, and greater flexibility in balancing workloads and prioritizing resource allocation.

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BIPIN JAYARAJ
CIO
MAKE A-WISH AMERICA

VMWARE FOOTPRINT

- VMware vSphere
- VMware vCloud Director
- VMware NSX Data Center

PLATFORM

PhoenixNAP Virtual Private Data Center powered by VMware

PARTNER

PhoenixNAP is a premier VMware Cloud Provider Partner, and a global IT infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS) provider that offers a variety of services that include innovative cloud solutions, bare-metal servers, hardware leasing, and co-location.

“VMware multi-cloud support helps us work with whichever cloud application provider offers us the best features for the best value,” Jayaraj says. “Having a multi-cloud environment helps us manage costs across the board and transform our spending from CapEx to OpEx, which is easier to control.”

Consequently, the organization’s websites can now handle big traffic spikes. Previously, Make-A-Wish would have had to purchase and install additional data center servers to handle anticipated spikes—which is expensive and requires additional management.

“With rapid provisioning of servers through virtualization, we can now scale horizontally to handle those bursts, and we’ve been able to successfully handle surges resulting from ESPN and Disney primetime specials or other events in the past year,” Jayaraj says.

Looking ahead

Make-A-Wish is exploring the use of artificial intelligence and bots to perform tasks such as managing some vSphere tasks via natural-language chat commands, which could further increase the productivity of IT team members.

Anything that can accelerate wish-granting is fair game. As Elizabeth Reich, the Make-A-Wish Arizona president and CEO, says: “We can’t change (children’s) medical outcomes, but we can transform lives.”