

“The Hitachi solution has enabled us to cut costs by over two thirds, and deliver strong security and control at the price of public cloud storage services.”

Daniel Eckerstorfer, System Engineer, GRZ IT Center



CASE STUDY

GRZ IT Center Gains Private Cloud Security and Control at Public Cloud Prices

Challenge: To compete with public cloud services, GRZ IT Center wanted to cut costs dramatically.

Solution: The company deployed an innovative solution that automates multiple management tasks, saving staff time.

Outcome: GRZ IT Center is now able to match the price of public cloud storage services to customers, while keeping services in-house, with higher data security, performance and control.

The Challenge

GRZ IT Center specializes in providing IT services for leading regional banks in Austria. Headquartered in Linz, the company employs more than 450 people to support 86 banks, which collectively operate 458 branches and serve more than a million customers.

In the last few years, competition in the IT services market has intensified dramatically. In particular, global public cloud vendors are using their economies of scale to compete aggressively on price. With this trend set to continue, local providers such as GRZ IT Center face a choice: Find ways to cut costs and compete more effectively, or risk watching services being moved off into the public cloud.

Daniel Eckerstorfer, system engineer at GRZ IT Center, explains: “Companies increasingly migrate workloads from their own data centers into the cloud. It has become commonplace that customers expect pricing for on-premises solutions to match offerings by cloud providers.”

“To see off this fresh wave of competition, we set out to offer high-quality and high-performance IT services to our banking clients for the same price as established public cloud platforms, and with enhanced security and control.”

The Solution

GRZ IT Center established that reducing the manual administration effort was a key opportunity for cost reduction: Administrators were tasked with managing around 2,000 virtual servers and 1,000 VMware virtualized desktops. So, the company focused its attention on automation of its VMware environments, aiming to enable more efficient operations and reduce workload.

To simplify the landscape, the team chose to consolidate its VMware landscapes to just two Hitachi Virtual Storage Platform G800 models with hybrid flash, in combination with 96 Hitachi Compute Blade 500 servers.



GRZ IT Center

INDUSTRY

IT Services for Banking

SOLUTIONS

Storage, Private Cloud, Hybrid Flash, Managed Services, Data Management

HARDWARE

Hitachi Compute Blade 500
Hitachi Virtual Storage Platform G800
Hitachi Flash Storage

SOFTWARE

Hitachi Dynamic Tiering, Hitachi Storage Virtualization Operating System with global-active device feature

SERVICES

Operations and maintenance services provided by Hitachi Data Systems Global Services Solutions

Outcomes

- Cut costs by over two thirds.
- Saves 87 working days of manual system administration.
- 50% lower system latency.
- Increased business productivity.

"We looked at proposals from several leading vendors," recalls Eckerstorfer. "Ultimately, we decided to go with Hitachi because the solution represented superb value for money. In the past, we have had excellent experience working with Hitachi, so we knew we could count on them. For support during the implementation, we engaged with the services team and they provided excellent solution deployment skills."

Storage is virtualized using Hitachi Storage Virtualization Operating System (SVOS), with automatic storage tiering provided by Hitachi Dynamic Tiering software. This solution shifts frequently accessed data to the fastest storage and rarely used data to more economical storage. Additionally, GRZ IT Center saves time and money by being able to easily extend the solution in pre-defined steps with components that come prebuilt and ready to install, allowing the company to increase capacity and performance flexibly, as needed.

For business continuity, GRZ IT Center deployed SVOS's global-active device. If one of the two storage systems is knocked out of action, global-active device ensures continuous service with no business interruption.

The Hitachi Data Systems Global Services Solutions team manages the solution up to the virtualization layer, releasing GRZ IT Center's in-house IT team from many time-consuming routine management tasks.

The Outcome

By automating storage administration and other tasks, GRZ IT Center unlocks enormous time savings for its internal IT team. For example, the team used to regularly patch each server individually three times a month, which took approximately two hours per server. Now, thanks to the frictionless Hitachi maintenance service, GRZ IT Center saves 87 working days of manual system administration every year.



Eckerstorfer explains: "To manage business growth without increasing staff levels, we need to find ways to help our personnel work more productively, and the Hitachi solution enables us to do just that. For example, with the number of servers growing by approximately 30% every year and our team reinstalling about 260 systems over 12 months, faster deployment of new virtual machines was a key concern. Automation now enables us to provision new systems in around a week, compared to two weeks previously, with further process improvements in the pipeline. And we expect to cut that time down to just half a day in the future."

On a technical note, system latency had begun to become an issue for some systems. By moving to the new Hitachi solution and taking advantage of the dynamic tiering technology, GRZ IT Center has cut latency by up to 50%. For virtual desktop (VDI) users, such as those in bank branches, the latency reduction is a huge help: It supports a smooth user experience when talking customers through different financing options.

Additional developments will include deployment of Hitachi solutions for VMware Virtual Volumes, which provide highly efficient storage utilization, specifically designed to support VMware vSphere environments.

Eckerstorfer concludes: "In total, the Hitachi solution has enabled us to cut costs by over two thirds and match the price of public cloud storage, such as Microsoft Azure. By offering top-quality IT services at competitive prices, we can satisfy our customers' expectations."

About HDS

Digital transformation improves enterprises' cost-efficiency, time to market, customer experience, and revenue through better data management. Hitachi Data Systems uses data to power the digital enterprise. HDS.com.



Corporate Headquarters
2845 Lafayette Street
Santa Clara, CA 95050-2639 USA
www.HDS.com | community.HDS.com

Regional Contact Information
Americas: +1 866 374 5822 or info@hds.com
Europe, Middle East and Africa: +44 (0) 1753 618000 or info.emea@hds.com
Asia Pacific: +852 3189 7900 or hds.marketing.apac@hds.com



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