

NHL Team Prepares for Future Technologies with Cisco and Tegile



Executive Summary

- **Customer Name:** Minnesota Wild
- **Industry:** Professional sports and hospitality
- **Location:** St. Paul, Minnesota
- **Number of Employees:** 250

Challenge

- Streamlining infrastructure management to support increased interaction with clients
- Managing and planning for infrastructure growth
- Following sustainability processes to promote environmental goals

Solution

- Used Cisco UCS solutions as foundation for flexible and scalable data center supporting virtual desktops
- Deployed multiprotocol Tegile storage arrays to support virtual desktops

Results

- Achieved 43 percent reduction in support costs
- Reduced power by 63 percent and heat output by 68 percent
- Reduced data from 42TB to 17TB

Technology / Application Partner:

- Tegile

Minnesota Wild supports fast-changing entertainment services by deploying Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS) and Tegile solutions.

Challenge

Since 2000, the Minnesota Wild National Hockey League (NHL) franchise has excited devoted hockey fans in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area, making its first playoff appearance in only its third season. The owner, Minnesota Sports & Entertainment (MSE), also operates the team's home arena, the Xcel Energy Center, and several other neighboring facilities, including the Saint Paul RiverCentre convention center and the historic Roy Wilkins Auditorium. As a result, IT technicians and administrators for the Minnesota Wild do more than just support sports teams; they also help run events ranging from professional symposiums to popular rock concerts.

The IT needs for the corporate headquarters and facilities are varied and demanding. Hockey fans have come to expect exciting audio and video to enhance their viewing experience. Clients renting out facilities also want the latest technologies and features to impress their respective audiences. “As part of the entertainment business, technology is an essential part of our services,” says Jim Ibister, vice president of facility administration for Minnesota Wild. “At the same time, we’re a hospitality business, so it’s important that even our IT staff can focus on interacting with clients rather than just on managing equipment.”

To better serve clients and fans, Minnesota Wild established three goals for its IT infrastructure: simplify infrastructure to boost staff productivity, improve resource management for controlled growth, and promote sustainability to conserve resources and provide environmentally conscious facilities for clients. Continuing to expand with the existing, traditional infrastructure would increase the power, space, and cooling demands, making it challenging for the organization to meet its sustainability goals. In addition, the traditional infrastructure was costly to scale, requiring significant investment in new servers and storage.

“Since implementing Cisco UCS and Tegile, our IT staff is spending less time fixing system issues and more time addressing customers’ needs. We’re saving 43 percent on equipment and personnel support costs over previous years.”

— Jim Ibister
VP Facility Administration
Minnesota Wild

Looking at long-term goals for cloud infrastructure and off-site hosting, Minnesota Wild decided to invest in easily manageable solutions that position the company strongly for the future. By combining virtualized Cisco Unified Computing System™ (UCS®) servers with Tegile hybrid storage solutions, Minnesota Wild established a highly agile data center environment that supports current and future cloud initiatives with virtual desktop infrastructure.

Solution

As an early adopter of Cisco® UCS solutions, Minnesota Wild was familiar with the flexibility and performance benefits from Cisco solutions, particularly when virtualized with VMware. Most applications currently run on virtualized Cisco UCS servers. Three Cisco UCS 5108 Blade Server Chassis hold Cisco UCS B250 M2 Blade Servers and Cisco UCS B200 M2 Blade Servers. Rather than connecting each blade to network and storage individually, Cisco UCS Blade Servers connect through the chassis for a streamlined infrastructure.

The Cisco infrastructure makes it easy to add or replace blades for enhanced scalability. Excellent memory density also enables high-performance virtualization for greater capacity with fewer physical devices. Minnesota Wild continues the Cisco environment into the network with high-performance Cisco Catalyst® 6500 Series Switches connected to the chassis through Cisco UCS 6120XP Fabric Interconnects and Cisco UCS 2104XP Fabric Extenders.

For storage, Minnesota Wild selected Tegile Zebi storage solutions, Cisco Compatible products. The data center previously contained Dell Compellent storage, but Tegile delivered much higher scalability, smaller footprint, and simple management for the small IT team. Minnesota Wild currently uses Tegile in three sites. The main site and disaster recovery site each contain a Tegile Zebi HA2100EP storage array with four Tegile Zebi J2100 expansion shelves. A third site contains a Tegile Zebi SS2100 storage array and two Tegile Zebi J1100 expansion shelves for backup.

In many traditional storage systems, data de-duplication and compression can significantly hurt storage performance, but Tegile uses new technologies to increase speed and agility instead. This approach enables Tegile to offer superior performance compared to traditional storage systems with fewer pieces of equipment, requiring less investment. At Minnesota Wild, early analysis indicates that Tegile achieves compression rates of 4:1 for a much smaller storage footprint compared to the Dell solution.

“Tegile and Cisco UCS work well together due to our similar approaches to virtual environments,” says Rob Commins, vice president of marketing at Tegile. “Both companies reduce costs for customers by delivering high density for superior performance in each device.”

The combined Cisco and Tegile solutions also focus on redundancy and scalability to improve the virtual environment. Tegile offers flexible, integrated multiprotocol support and numerous functions that enhance data protection and availability. Cisco UCS uses the modular blade server infrastructure to improve scalability and drive more bandwidth to users compared to traditional environments.

Results

Minnesota Wild has implemented virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) using the Cisco UCS and Tegile environment for its finance department. Members of the department all use Microsoft Dynamic GP software as part of their daily business, but updating and managing the software on 15 separate desktops increased the load on the IT team. With a VDI, Minnesota Wild can centralize software management in the data center. IT staff only needs to update software once for all staff, improving productivity, and finance staff gain the flexibility to access software from virtually anywhere with an Internet connection, not just while at their desks.

With only two people on the IT team supporting Minnesota Wild and related MSE facilities, data centers must be as easy to manage as possible. Cisco UCS and Tegile solutions streamline the data center environment to reduce the time spent working on infrastructure. “Since implementing Cisco UCS and Tegile, our IT staff is spending less time fixing system issues and more time addressing customers’ needs,” says Ibister. “We’re saving 43 percent on equipment and personnel support costs over previous years.”

The high density found in both the Cisco UCS and Tegile solutions also reduces costs by requiring less equipment to handle high capacities. For the cost that it would have taken just to purchase a handful of traditional storage units to expand capacity for the virtual desktop implementation, Minnesota Wild could afford to completely replace its storage solution with new equipment from Tegile. As the data center continues to expand, Minnesota Wild can easily deploy new virtual servers rather than purchasing new physical equipment every time. Not only does this increase the agility of the data center, but it also makes the data center less costly to expand in the future.

The compact physical environment also leads to significant savings in power and cooling costs. Efficient infrastructure and consolidation have helped Minnesota Wild reduce power by 63 percent and operate the data centers with 68 percent lower cooling costs. In addition to the savings, Minnesota Wild appreciates the environmental impact of these reductions. With more organizations looking to go green, this feature can serve as a differentiator for customers who consider environmental goals when planning their events.

Next Steps

Minnesota Wild plans to move towards a hybrid environment, eventually moving applications and data into an offsite or managed cloud environment. Building on the anticipated success of the virtual desktop implementation in the finance department, the IT staff hopes to demonstrate the savings and performance that can be achieved through cloud environments and eventually by outsourcing management tasks to experts. “We deal with a large amount of sensitive data, including contracts and player evaluations,” says Ibister. “Cisco UCS and Tegile delivery top security in addition to performance. As we continue to grow, these solutions will become the cornerstone of our future implementations.”



Product List

Data Center Solutions

- Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS)
- Cisco UCS B250 M2 Blade Server
- Cisco UCS B200 M2 Blade Server

Routing and Switching

- Cisco Catalyst 6500 Series Switch

Fabric Interconnects

- Cisco UCS 6120XP Fabric Interconnects
- Cisco UCS 2104XP Fabric Extender

Applications

- Microsoft CRM
- Microsoft Dynamics GP

Virtualization

- VMware

Storage

- Tegile Zebi HA2100EP
- Tegile Zebi SS2100
- Tegile Zebi J2100
- Tegile Zebi J1100



For More Information

To find out more about Cisco Unified Data Center, please visit:

www.cisco.com/go/unifieddatacenter.

To find out more about Cisco UCS, please visit: www.cisco.com/go/ucs.

To learn more about Tegile Solutions, please visit:

<https://marketplace.cisco.com/catalog/companies/tegile-systems>.

To find out more about Tegile, please visit: www.tegile.com.



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