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## Cushman & Wakefield Hybrid Cloud Solution

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### Client Success Story

“We want to make investments that support our core business, and buying and managing servers is not our core business.”

## The Organization

Cushman & Wakefield is a global real estate services group whose rapid growth was being slowed by an expensive and unresponsive datacenter infrastructure. The company needed to consolidate its servers into a more efficient private cloud environment based on Windows Server 2012 and Microsoft System Center 2012 R2. They wanted a design for a hybrid cloud solution that included both on-premises private cloud and off-premises public cloud resources utilizing Windows Azure.

## The Challenge

Cushman & Wakefield has datacenters around the globe, but it really didn't want to be in the datacenter business. “We are a global commercial real estate firm,” says Craig Cuyar, Global Chief Information Officer for Cushman & Wakefield. “We want to make investments that support our core business, and buying and managing servers is not our core business. In fact, we have what we call a DOS strategy—‘don't own stuff.’ We were not an asset-intensive organization in any area but IT, where we had many underutilized assets.”

The firm had about 250 servers in its US datacenter, another 110 in its European datacenter, and hundreds of servers scattered across branch offices. Over time, IT ended up overprovisioning servers each time it deployed an application to ensure that capacity would be there at peak times. This meant that millions of dollars' worth of hardware was sitting idle much of the time.

To reduce costs, they made the decision to move the US datacenter to a colocation site and virtualize test and development servers using VMware software. However, the IT department was unable to virtualize production workloads because of high licensing costs.

Operational expenses were growing as well. The IT team traditionally monitored, managed, and reacted to servers on an individual and manual basis. “My staff was so focused on keeping our infrastructure running that it had no time to investigate and implement new ideas that could move the business forward,” Cuyar says. “We didn't want to invest our money in hiring more IT people; we would rather hire brokers. We had to find a smarter, more efficient way to operate.”

## The Solution

We created a hybrid cloud environment in which some applications run on-premises in a Microsoft-based private cloud environment and others run in Windows Azure, the Microsoft public cloud development, hosting, and management environment. Mike Machulsky, Vice President of Sales for VertitechIT added, “Cushman & Wakefield really wanted to embrace the cloud and loved the idea of not owning servers, but it was not realistic for them to move 100 percent to the cloud right away. They moved to the cloud on their terms, gradually moving workloads to the public cloud while using System Center as the single management console for both on-premises and public cloud environments. This low-risk strategy was a huge benefit for them.”



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Following a thorough assessment of company infrastructure and business objectives, recommendations were made to refresh hardware with modern servers and storage that took full advantage of Windows Server 2012. A highly efficient private cloud infrastructure was developed that consolidated 40 racks of servers (275 physical servers) in the US datacenter to just 4 racks of high performance storage and host servers running 400+ virtual machines. Virtualization efforts included the largest databases running Microsoft SQL Server 2012 data management software, SAP, and Oracle business applications.

Cushman & Wakefield already had a data warehouse and other applications running in Windows Azure and this design allowed for the shifting of other applications that required scalability at lower cost. If an app needed to be scaled to a million users, it could prove to be more cost effective to host it in Azure.

System Center 2012 R2 made the hybrid cloud environment possible. Physical and virtual server monitoring and management, software deployment, workflow automation, service management, and data backup are now automated, optimizing the performance and use of the hybrid cloud environment.

## The Results

By building a hybrid cloud infrastructure, Cushman & Wakefield has dramatically reduced its IT spend by 75 percent, better supporting business growth, and providing disaster preparedness at an affordable price. Much of the savings came from server acquisition, power and cooling, datacenter real estate, and management costs.

“We’ve taken 275 servers down to a 20-node blade infrastructure,” says Gary Bent, Senior Infrastructure Architect. “We’ve consolidated 15 standalone SQL Server database servers to a 4-node blade cluster. These are huge consolidations. By taking costs out of our US and European datacenters, we can invest in a new datacenter in Asia, giving us capabilities beyond what we have today.”

Additionally, by standardizing, virtualizing, and cloud-enabling its IT assets, the company moved from a fixed-cost to a variable-cost model. “With cloud computing, we’re using our IT assets far more efficiently,” Cuyar says. “We’re not investing in massive piles of hardware that sit idle most of the time. We have a compact reservoir of IT resources that we can dynamically allocate when and where needed.”

Today, the Cushman & Wakefield IT team can deploy IT resources in minutes versus the weeks that it takes to deploy physical servers. “IT is no longer a roadblock to moving the business forward,” Cuyar says. “We can scale our capacity as needed and shift IT assets where they’re needed. This faster response from us lets the business move faster; developers are not waiting while the IT staff orders and sets up servers.”

The solution also provided an inexpensive, easy-to-use disaster recovery solution that helps it keep its global business running around the clock. “We can fail over individual virtual machines, physical servers, or entire datacenters to backup resources, nearly instantaneously,” Bent says.

Cuyar concludes, “Our hybrid cloud infrastructure helps us drive maximum benefit to the organization from both financial and capabilities perspectives. We can deliver capabilities today that we couldn’t before and are quickly moving to a model where we don’t own so much IT stuff.”