CASE STUDY

Lifeway Christian Stores

LifeWay Christian Stores' Successful Migration

LifeWay Christian Stores (LifeWay) was introduced to TDS by Gartner Research as migration specialists to consider for their data center migration project.

THE CHALLENGE

LifeWay was challenged by the massive interdependencies between their applications and infrastructure combined with the uptime requirements and freeze periods that accompany a large retail business.

LifeWay built a new corporate headquarters in Nashville TN and made the decision to move to a co-location data center model. This shift created the need for a migration which LifeWay used as an opportunity to modernize. As part of this project, LifeWay had strategic goals to reduce their data center footprint, go from a traditional to converged platform, and modernize their network.

TDS Accelerating IT Transformation

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LifeWay was also concerned with their internal resource capacity to participate in the migration as they had day jobs and other ancillary projects on top of the migration (new backup solution, PeopleSoft/WebSphere upgrade, headquarters office IT, etc.) and needed to reduce the impact the migration would have on these resources.

Most critically, LifeWay could not incur an unplanned outage as the business required continuous operations.

After a thorough evaluation process, LifeWay selected TDS to lead their data center and modernization transformations. TDS presented a methodology, service offering, and tool set to LifeWay giving them confidence that TDS could lead LifeWay through the project with a high level of efficiency and significantly reduced risk.

Data Discovery and Analysis

TDS quickly collected and normalized numerous sources of application and infrastructure data and importing these into the TransitionManager platform with very little time required from the LifeWay team. TDS worked to analyze this initial data, identifying any data gaps and conflicts to prepare for the SME validation interviews with the LifeWay team.

During this time, TDS also worked with LifeWay through a series of migration strategy workshops, to identify the various potential migration methods and toolsets. TDS provided the pros and cons and budgets for each method and tool. One guiding principle for LifeWay was to limit any required downtime or request for additional maintenance windows. .

TDS worked with LifeWay to identify applications to migrate via vMotion/vSphere, storage based replication or physical lift and shift. Also, during these strategy workshops TDS provided a high-level network design analysis detailing opportunity to right-size capacity and align the design with TDS best practices developed from our deep consulting experience and previous network migration projects.

This proved especially valuable as LifeWay went to market for their new co-location facility procuring a more precise amount of required capacity for their future environment.

Dependencies to other specialized vendors such as EMC, Cisco and existing system integrators were also identified as part of this process and tracked in TransitionManager.

With a trusted source of data and migration methods established, TDS started to work through bundling criteria with LifeWay to determine how the migration waves would be constructed. LifeWay identified key applications such as their ecommerce site, PeopleSoft and their Oracle database environments with a paralyzing number of inter-dependencies, presenting a risk of unplanned outages if not properly cared for.

The team turned to the dependency analyzer feature in TransitionManager, dynamically modeling the different move groups using the tool to automatically highlight dependency issues that each wave scenario created. Working through different options in TransitionManager, application and infrastructure components were re-distributed to more evenly balance move groups based upon identification of viable soft dependency breaks such as acceptable application latency, batch processes and file transfer dependencies.

Managing Change without Risk

In parallel to the application dependency analysis, TDS worked with the LifeWay technology team to develop low-level technical runbooks, automation scripts and methods, as well as provisioned and tested the required migration tools such as vMotion and RecoverPoint.

TDS helped LifeWay to achieve a benchmark to migrate 100 OS images per event, the majority of them without required downtime. TDS used a combination of T-minus tasks and application profiles to manage applications tracked in TransitionManager, as TDS needed to support LifeWay's on-going software release cycles for business-critical applications throughout the project.

TDS was plugged into the LifeWay change management process to help identify any changes that occurred after the initial on-boarding and discovery of the environment would impact validated dependencies or the established migration waves. This was accomplished through data synchronization with LifeWay's CMDB, vCenter exports, and network scans.

The application profile would be altered to match the changes and if needed, a brief discussion with the SME's would take place to validate the changes captured in TransitionManager. Using this process, TDS was able to track changes throughout the project and mitigate the risk those changes might bring.

TDS then worked with LifeWay through a conceptual design of the proper steps and task sequences required for the migration events based on TDS best practice templates and tailored to Lifeway requirements.

After receiving an approved migration plan, TDS developed the "recipes," or custom scripts, used to auto-generate the pre-migration, execution and post-migration runbooks. TDS reviewed event runbooks with the LifeWay team during tabletop review sessions, validating the task sequence and, more importantly, fine tuning the duration of these tasks to be able to confidently predict the time required for application migrations.

SUMMARY

LifeWay ultimately migrated their entire IT environment with no unplanned downtime or impact to the business or customer user group. The result of this project was a next generation network, compute and storage infrastructure.

It is now hosted in a significantly reduced data center footprint, providing much higher resiliency at a substantial reduction in operating costs, all delivered on-time and on budget.

TDS has been helping organizations plan for and manage complex change for over 17 years and we built the only software platform that is specifically designed to accelerate, simplify, and orchestrate any IT transformation process – and eliminate risk in execution.
Contact us today to discuss how we can help your organization prepare and recovery quickly from whatever comes next.
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