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Three Ways That Hyperconverged Infrastructure Can Transform Law Firm IT

Introduction

Law firm IT professionals are under rising pressure to spend less time and money on the firm's infrastructure and more of those valuable resources on specific technology applications that drive value to the business. Unfortunately, the current infrastructure options available to law firms make that change difficult because they are complex, siloed and costly to maintain and upgrade. In fact, even cloud usage — which surpassed the 50% mark among law firms in 2017 according to the ABA TechReport[1] — poses challenges for law firm IT teams to effectively manage due to the various data centers on which they must rely.

"One of the operational challenges of data centers is having to cobble together the right mixture of servers, storage, and networks to support demanding applications," writes Zeus Kerravala, founder of ZK Research, in *Network World.*[2] "Then, once the infrastructure is deployed, IT operations needs to figure out how to scale up quickly without disrupting the application."

The purpose of this white paper is to introduce law firm professionals to a new approach now gaining steam that has the potential to take law firm IT to the next generation of cloud computing: hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI).

What is HCI?

HCI is a breakthrough, software-centric approach to cloud infrastructure that has been growing by triple-digits since 2015, according to an IDC report.[3] HCI combines x86-based servers with intelligent software to create flexible building blocks that replace legacy infrastructure options with a new, turnkey infrastructure. This new approach is called "hyperconverged infrastructure" because it integrates servers, data storage and end-to-end systems / operations management in one IT framework.

The key to HCI is software-defined storage (SDS) technology, which aggregates all existing hard drives within a cluster and represents them as a single, highly redundant storage capacity pool. If one node goes down, data is still available for the rest of the cluster, so workloads will continue running without disruption. This configuration also dramatically improves server availability and performance, as well as storage scalability, since it is no longer limited to locally attached disks as with legacy infrastructure frameworks.

HCI is a true breakthrough for law firm IT professionals because it makes it easier to launch new cloud services, supporting enterprises that want to easily package and migrate new workloads. In fact, early adopters have discovered that HCI helps cut deployment down to a matter of minutes.

"Working together, the cloud and hyperconverged infrastructure can help realize the dream of an abstract data environment that can scale on demand and dynamically adjust itself to provide a continuously low-resource profile without sacrificing performance levels or centralized control," Arthur Cole writes for *IT Business Edge.*[4]

Three Ways that HCI Can Transform Law Firm IT

There are three major reasons that HCI can transform the way that law firm IT professionals manage the infrastructure for their firms. These factors dovetail with the evolution of the law firm IT function as it transitions away from a focus on "keeping the lights on" and towards a focus on leveraging the power of technology applications to drive enterprise value in the firms.

1. Lower costs. The commodity pricing of x86 servers — the core building blocks of HCI — represents a tremendous opportunity to drive down hardware costs. Moreover, by eliminating the need for dedicated storage systems, there is another opportunity for firms to reduce traditional IT costs. Finally, the scale-out of the architecture allows for less expensive initial deployments that can be scaled over time.

For example, HCI enables cost savings to law firms in specific IT areas such as maintenance, power, facilities, licensing and disaster recovery. The result is 39% lower IT infrastructure costs on average for customers of the Nutanix HCI Platform, an industry leader.[5]

2. Increased agility. An additional benefit of the scale-out architecture used in HCI is that it allows IT departments to quickly scale compute and storage resources by adding more nodes to existing clusters, all without taking applications offline. This significantly increases the agility of a firm's IT infrastructure over legacy approaches. This increased agility also drives business value to law firms because it serves an

important risk mitigation role for IT. HCI reduces unplanned outages and enables faster resolution of incidents when they do occur.

3. Reduced management burdens.

The simplified deployment of HCI means that a law firm's technology solutions can be up and running with the fewest steps possible. In addition, the high level of automation built into HCI allows for non-experts to manage storage and monitor systems more easily. These breakthroughs reduce the time and burden traditionally required for infrastructure management.

Due to this reduction in management burdens, the law firm's IT staff is able to achieve significant gains in productivity. For example, an IDC study[6] of Nutanix customers found that HCI deployment resulted in an average of 61% less IT staff time needed to deploy, manage and support the IT infrastructure — an approximate value of $1 million per organization.

Early HCI adopters are translating these gains in performance directly into improved business results: IDC estimates that Nutanix HCI customers realize higher revenue and operational efficiencies worth an annual average of $2.44 million per organization and an astonishing average five-year return on investment of more than 500%.[7]

Conclusion

HCI is the next-generation enterprise technology approach that will transform law firm IT strategy and operations. In short, we believe that HCI will transform law firm IT because of its capability to significantly boost firm profitability. Our new HCI offering, NextGen Legal Private Cloud (powered by Nutanix), has been designed not only for traditional cloud-based storage, but also to provide a platform for other key law firm enterprise applications, such as VDI, email and messaging applications.

NextGen Legal Private Cloud is already producing staggering reductions in IT costs for law firms, including payback in as little as seven months. Moreover, NextGen Legal Private Cloud clients are seeing 97% fewer unplanned outages, resulting in millions of dollars added to the bottom line. The future of law firm IT is here. Hyperconverged infrastructure might not roll off the tongue with ease, but consider it your firm's new IT weapon.
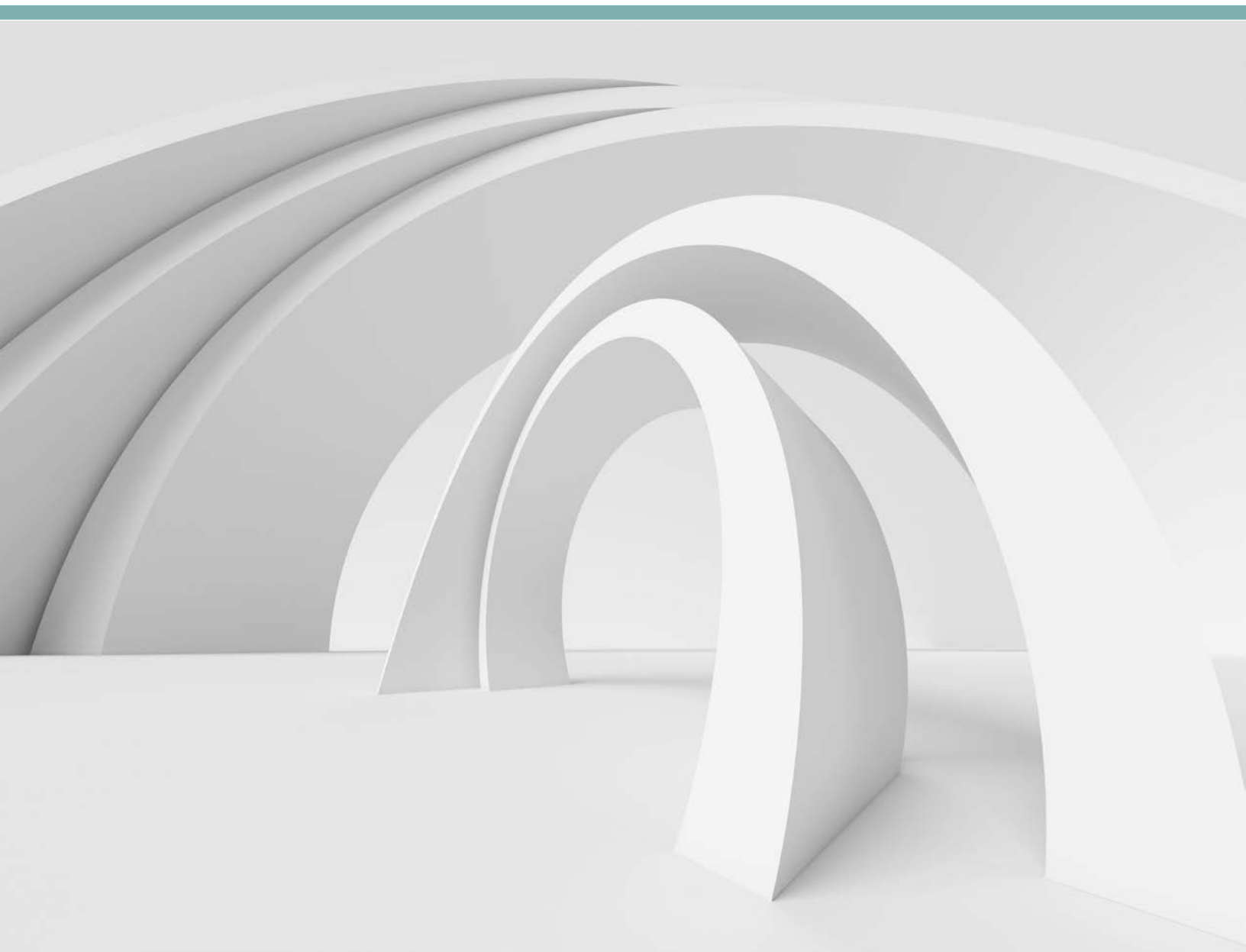
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