DIGITAL WEST DELIVERS DISASTER RECOVERY FOR CLOUD CUSTOMERS WITH VMWARE VCLOUD® AVAILABILITY CLOUD TO CLOUD

DIGITAL WEST

INDUSTRY
CLOUD SERVICE PROVIDER

LOCATION
HEADQUARTERS: SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA
DATA CENTERS:
• SAN LUIS OBISPO, CA
• DENVER, CO

CO-LOCATED DATA CENTERS:
• SAN JOSE, CA
• LOS ANGELES, CA
• SYDNEY, AUSTRALIA
• NEW YORK, NY
• ZURICH, SWITZERLAND

KEY CHALLENGES
• Provide a cloud-based DR solution that is easy to deploy and cost effective
• Generate new revenue streams
• Support service level agreements including aggressive RTOs
• Simplify DR testing
• Seamless failback and failover to the cloud

SOLUTION
VMware vCloud® Availability Cloud to Cloud Disaster Recovery

Digital West is the result of several companies coming together to provide larger SMBs and small enterprise customers with data, voice and managed services. Today its data and voice customers benefit from an organization that can deliver cloud infrastructure as well as engineering, systems architecture support, and professional services.

"We offer private cloud, public cloud and hybrid cloud services, and have also started providing software as a service," says Matt Newbrough, Vice President Technology. "As a VMware Cloud Provider, 100% of our cloud offering is backed by VMware using vCloud Director and NSX."

The Challenge
Customers were increasingly looking to Digital West for backup and recovery services. Providing a disaster recovery (DR) solution seemed like the next natural step to add additional value to existing customer relationships. While Digital West used its data centers to offer DR for customers who had on-site servers or other servers outside of its realm of management, cloud to cloud DR wasn't an option. Not only was Digital West leaving money on the table, it also meant that the company wasn't meeting a critical customer need.

"We had customers who were using VMware vCloud Availability to back-up local workloads or protecting local workloads to a Digital West data center. For us to do that same thing for customers that were in our public or private cloud offering, and to fail over outside of our data center to a different data center, was cost prohibitive," explains Newbrough. "The complexity of failing over out of a cloud into another cloud, even if it's your own cloud, is more complex. It requires more manual intervention and we didn't feel like we could offer a solid RTO time to our higher-end customers. Without cloud to cloud, it was not an option for us because we couldn't make a business case for it given the amount of manual intervention that was required."

The Solution
Digital West deployed VMware vCloud Availability Cloud to Cloud disaster recovery to fail over and move workloads back and forth between its Denver and San Luis Obispo data centers. The scalable DR solution leverages Digital West's existing VMware investment and its team's familiarity with VMware solutions.

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MATT NEWBROUGH
VICE PRESIDENT TECHNOLOGY

BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Simplifies fail over from one cloud to another
- Scalable performance for concurrent replications in multi-tenant environment
- Eases deployment and management with seamless vCloud Director integration
- Tenant self-service protection, failover, and failback workflows per virtual machine (VM)/vAPP
- Frees up engineering resources to focus on innovation
- Leverages existing skills and familiarity with VMware solutions

VMWARE FOOTPRINT
- VMware vCloud® Availability Cloud to Cloud
- VMware vCloud Director™
- VMware NSX®

Whether it's a SMB customer or an enterprise that is borne in the cloud, set-up, maintenance, migration, failover, and failback is the same.

"For us, on the engineering side, deployment was absolutely seamless. The solution did exactly what was promised and it was very easy," notes Newbrough. "Now we can further monetize our existing VMware vCloud Director multi-tenant cloud environment with DR services, including replication and failover capabilities for workloads at both VM and vApp level. It's kind of one of those too good to be true offerings — it does what it's supposed to do every single time."

Business Results and Benefits

For Digital West customers, successful disaster failover and failback is number one. Early on, Digital West discovered that many tools could help customers failover and test their DR scenario relatively easily, but migrating back was not as simple because they had to schedule a maintenance window for a process that wasn't as seamless as the failover. With VMware vCloud Availability Cloud to Cloud, failing over and failing back is the exact same procedure and almost the same number of steps. There's no additional risk or downtime. Today Digital West can failover live workloads to a different region of the country for customers who need a high availability, high uptime solution because it's critical to their business.

The self-service consumption model also means that customers don't need to engage Digital West resources directly and wait for a scheduled maintenance window. Because customers can protect workloads themselves, they benefit from greater control and flexibility while Digital West is able to free-up resources for activities that pay dividends back to the business — from proof of concepting new products or tools, to innovating new ways to meet customer needs.

"Customers are excited to be able to do their own failover scenarios without needing to engage us for testing," explains Newbrough. "They are able to set their own RPOs and RTOs and test successfully without needing to call and ask us to move a bunch of networks around. It's made our DR customers our best advocates when pursuing new business — it's one thing for us to tell new customers about our DR offering, but it's another to hear from an existing customer how great it works."

In the past, Digital West couldn't actively pursue larger DR customers due to a resource- and labor-intensive process that didn't scale. Now it can point to a VMware solution that's integrated tightly into vCloud Director, which eases that conversation and builds trust in Digital West as well as the offering itself.

"I think the biggest thing for us is that VMware vCloud Availability Cloud to Cloud has enabled us to pursue larger customers who have a disaster recovery strategy. Today we have a solution that fits their requirements, whereas before it was more of a snowflake that required lots of manual scripting on the backend to try to merge together disjointed tools to accomplish an actual DR scenario," says Newbrough. "With VMware vCloud Availability Cloud to Cloud it's an integrated feature set into the platform we're already familiar with – it couldn't be easier."

Looking Ahead

The success of Digital West's cloud to cloud offering creates new opportunities for growth as the company expands its geographic reach.

"Previously our DR solution was so manual- and labor-intensive we couldn't think about dramatically scaling our offering to reach new customers," Newbrough explains. "Now we have a modular solution that enables us to have conversations we wouldn't have entertained before — we've proven it works and now we can just rinse and repeat in new markets. It's given us DR flexibility and confidence we didn't have before."

With the VMware vCloud Availability Cloud to Cloud disaster recovery solution in place, Digital West is evaluating other VMware solutions that can also add value to its offerings. A proof of concept is currently underway on VMware Network Insight™, which improves network visibility, troubleshooting and security planning across public, private and hybrid clouds, as well as vRealize® Automation™ to accelerate the delivery of services through automation and pre-defined policies.

"As a cloud services provider, developing strategic partnerships with companies and vendors who are invested in the service provider market is vital because you don't want to end up putting all your eggs in one basket with somebody, only to have them bail out of that market segment," concludes Newbrough. "VMware has shown that they are invested in the success of providers and bringing products to market that are scalable and supported by an engaged team of engineers who want to help. VMware vCloud Availability Cloud to Cloud is not only an example of VMware's commitment to service providers, but also to their commitment to helping us grow our business."

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