

VMware Experience (First Eight years)

I was first introduced to VMWare in 2008 or 2009 while serving in the role of IT Manager for Avjet Corporation, one of the largest BBJ and Gulfstream air charter and sales organizations in the world. I was with them for twelve years. At the end of my tenure there they were purchased by Jet Aviation, a General Dynamics company. At the time of the purchase the sales organization split off and I left to pursue other opportunities, after assisting with the transition and IT hand-off.

In my first few years there, we were looking at upgrading our financial accounting software (Sage MAS 500) and the support vendor of record recommended we look into virtualization. At the time we had a single rack of about a dozen aging HP ProLiant servers running Microsoft Server 2003. I think we also ran Exchange Server 2003 when I first arrived. I upgraded Exchange three or four times in a dozen years along with MS Office (2003, 2007, 2010, 2013 and finally 2016) as well as the desktop and server operating systems (XP, then 7 and finally 10).

I am fairly certain we first purchased and installed VSphere Standard 4.0 (again late 2009, early 2010) with two ESXi hosts. I think we added VCenter almost immediately, then upgraded to 4.1, 5.0, 5.1 and finally 5.5, upgrading hosts to add cores and memory to increase capacity. We started and remained with an HP 10TB iSCSI SAN the whole time I remained with the company, which was pretty outdated by the time I left. Somehow, I was able to convince management after a while we needed to split our data center for redundancy and fault tolerance.

We ended up with six hosts split between two buildings and connected by 10G fiber. By this time, we had moved up from HP to Juniper switches. We switched to Enterprise licensing to support clustering, Storage VMotion and High Availability, stuff that is all available in 6.5 standard today. But it cost a lot more back then. And by the way, I did not do this all by myself, although I think I racked just about every server. We worked with a local VAR who had a whole lot more knowledge of VMWare than I did until I took my 40 hours of VCP 5.0 training in late 2012.

In summary, I introduced, designed the architecture, supported and was the only admin of VMWare there at Avjet from the time I introduced it in 2010 until I left in 2017. I managed a small support staff, one for user desktop issues and one for a large number of iPads (800) we were rolling out to our flight crews at the time.

Additional VMware (2017 to 2021) – Four Years

Valley Presbyterian Hospital (Fall 2017) - I knew I was not going to be long with VPH. I was approached by an agency for a contract to supplement a team of senior network engineers as we migrated several hundred servers (almost all virtual) to the cloud. I supported multiple versions of VMware from 4.0 with Horizon View VDI on up to 6.5. I was exposed to Dell EMC CMS and VNX NAS along with older Dell EMC Celera NS-480 NAS. We had dozens of HP ProLiant DL360, 370 & 380 G5 through G9 servers along with HP Blade C7000 that had sixteen BL460c hosts – altogether about 200 virtualized Windows servers.

Natren Probiotics (2017-2018) – I was recruited for this prime opportunity to manage the transition of this three-location small manufacturing business connected by a failing Point-to-Point wireless system to dual-ISP connected links at each location. I contracted with a local VAR to help us move our data center from one of the locations which we were closing to a brand-new data center we designed and setup together. We went from old dying HP ProLiant servers to new Dell PowerEdge servers. Also went from all physical single-user servers to virtualizing the twenty servers onto the three new Dell PE R630 hosts and an HPE Nimble C1000 20TB SAN with hybrid dual controller (active-active) and cloud backup.

Canoga Perkins – Sep 2018 to July 2021 – Again I was recruited (fifth time in 18 years) to join a dying 4G network products company that was about to retool itself into a 5G TSN Switch powerhouse. I came on board as a network engineer to support two small HP ProLiant hosts and an old HP MSA 2020 20TB SAN. Over the last 2.5 years I have added three more SANs for a total of 140TB of storage, another host to add cores, and radically expanded the available memory on the hosts to support of current 25 VMs with capacity to easily double that now.

We are on a hiring binge, adding engineers and marketing staff. Have added a half dozen dedicated physical servers for specialized engineering functions and upgraded VMWare from 5.5 to 6.5. Am in the process of virtualizing numerous older servers and engineering workstations that function as servers because the engineers need to get the services off the old dying hardware. I was promoted to IT Manager, managing a desktop support tech. I also just hired a dev / ops ERP specialist to support our aging MRP system. Current project is to virtualize it.