MetaBank Invests in Tintri Storage

Tintri Systems Provide High Performance
for Virtual Environment

Company Information

MetaBank is a federally chartered savings bank headquartered in Sioux Falls, South Dakota. From its beginnings in Storm Lake, Iowa back in 1954, it has grown to become one of the top mid-size banks in the United States. MetaBank now provides a variety of financial products and services to meet the needs of its commercial, agricultural, and retail customers from eleven bank offices located across Iowa and South Dakota. As a recognized leader in the industry, MetaBank has been named among the top community banks and thrifts and the top-performing mid-sized banks in the nation year after year.

IT Challenges

MetaBank had been relying on a grid architecture storage systems at its Sioux Falls datacenter. "The grid architecture SAN wasn't providing consistent enough performance for our virtual desktop environment," noted Ryan Sturm, director of system and application administration at MetaBank.

Between 100 and 150 employees are now using the virtual desktops to access many of the bank's applications. "We always wanted storage that was dedicated to our VDI environment, but for budgetary reasons, our virtualized desktops were always put on the traditional storage arrays with our physical servers," noted Sturm. "Performance on the old storage systems left a lot to be desired by every end user in our company. Our goal was to put VDI on its own 'island' of storage, so it wouldn't be affected by our resource-intensive MS SQL and Exchange workloads. Whenever the demand for those applications increased, the VDI workload always suffered the most in terms of performance and latency."

Finding Tintri

System Administration Manager Luke Schwingler was first introduced to Tintri at VMworld in 2012. "I spoke with a gentleman from William Woods University in Missouri," Schwingler recalled. "He was a huge advocate of Tintri with a lot of real-world experience on VDI and performance monitoring. He explained how they were utilizing the storage at the University and told me to go talk to the guys at Tintri. He had tested a lot of different vendors' options, including several all flash systems, and had chosen Tintri due to its superior performance and manageability."

After a careful review, Sturm and Schwingler purchased one Tintri T620 system for MetaBank's virtualized environment. "The deployment was as simple as everyone told us it would be," Schwingler reported. "We connected the power cords to the Tintri system, attached the Ethernet cables, gave it an IP address, and we were ready to go."

Industry
- Banking

Geography
- Sioux Falls, South Dakota

Website
- www.metabank.com

Virtualization environment
- Microsoft Hyper-V
- Current storage: distributed grid array from a large SAN vendor

VM profile
- MS Server 2012 R2 RDS VDI and Financial Fraud / Compliance Hyper-V servers

Key challenges
- Existing storage system was delivering inconsistent performance for VDI

Tintri solution
- Tintri VMstore™ T620 system

Primary use case
- Tintri is being used for all virtual desktop and certain critical server workloads

Business benefits
- Obtained higher performance for virtual applications and servers
- Eliminated all calls to the helpdesk complaining of slow performance due to storage bottlenecks
- Obtained excellent, proactive support

Migrating to Hyper-V

In addition to the Tintri migration, MetaBank was simultaneously switching from its existing VMware vSphere environment to Microsoft's Hyper-V hypervisor. "Running Hyper-V on Tintri has been an excellent experience," Schwingler noted. "We performed a very long test run of our Tintri T620 to make sure we could easily create our file shares and VMs on the new platform. The Tintri system is performing extremely well in our virtual environment. And even though the Tintri platform is really great now, new features just keep coming."

Better Performance for Virtual Desktops

"We haven't received a single call or trouble ticket about slow performance on the virtual desktops since we moved to Tintri," Sturm said. "We used to get three or four per week. And we knew that those calls and tickets were only the tip of the iceberg, since most of our users had come to accept the fact that the systems were slow. They didn't like it—but they knew calling to complain wouldn't make their applications go any faster. Now we're actually getting compliments from our end users on the speed of their desktops. One of our employees sent us an email that said, "I don't have any idea what you did in the background, but it certainly made our desktops go much faster. Keep up the good work!"

Using Tintri Support

"Tintri Support has been even better than I expected," Schwingler reported. "It's much better than any other vendor we have worked with. We went through a lot of 'growing pains' with our previous SAN vendor during their latest acquisition. Working with Tintri support was great from day one. Whenever we call, we get connected to somebody right away who knows what we're talking about. And if they don't know how to help us with our question or issue immediately, they go and get someone who does."

Sturm also appreciated the easy access to Tintri's executives and developers. "We talked with the Tintri developer who is writing the Hyper-V code at both VMworld and at the Microsoft Ignite conference a few months ago," Sturm said. "We know each other on a first-name basis now and he knows all about our implementation here at MetaBank. All of the people at Tintri are happy to help us, and they always find a quick resolution to any question we might have."

Great Follow-Up

One of the trouble tickets Luke Schwingler submitted recently required a minor bug fix. "Our Tintri support rep told me it would take a few weeks to resolve the issue," Schwingler reported. "He called me on a biweekly basis to send updates, saying, 'I talked to the team, they're working on it, they have it staged, and now they are testing it.' He just wanted me to know it was coming and that he didn't forget about it. And sure enough, the fix came even faster than promised. I appreciate the good communication we have with the support team, and we have been very well taken care of by everyone at Tintri."

Moving Physical Servers to Tintri

"Only two different storage vendors are in our fiscal 2016 budget," concluded Sturm. "The majority of our workloads will be on Tintri going forward. We do have one physical workload that will remain on a different platform for now, but we are looking at moving that physical load over to Tintri as well. We are conducting a proof of concept on the T850 by putting a physical SQL workload on the system by using virtualized scale-out file servers, enabling us to use Tintri as the backend storage. We don't know if other Tintri customers have already done this, but we are quite optimistic that it will work for us to. We promise to report back when we are done with that project!"

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> **Ryan Sturm,**
> Director of System and Application Administration, MetaBank

Global Headquarter
303 Ravendale Dr.
Mountain View, CA 94043
United States
+1 650-810-8200
info@tintri.com

EMEA Headquarters
Fountain House 10th Fl
130 Fenchurch Street
London EC3M 5DJ
+44 (0) 203 053 0853
emea@tintri.com

ANZ Headquarters
MLC Centre Level 56
19 Martin Place
Sydney NSW 2000
+61 2 9238 2128
anz@tintri.com

Japan Headquarters
Level 6, Kishimoto Building
2-2-1 Marunouchi, Chiyoda-ku,
Tokyo 100-0005 Japan
+81 (3) 6213-5400
info.japan@tintri.com

www.tintri.com | info@tintri.com | @tintri | @Tintri_EMEA