



IT and modern storage technology supports strategic business value of in-person stores



Storage capacity is no longer a problem



IT and storage management has been greatly simplified



Business continuity is assured

Fashion retailer Modemakers opts for future-proof storage and simplicity in management

Modemakers is a Belgian fashion specialist with 11 boutiques. The ambition is to give customers personalized advice as a way to offer a unique in-store shopping experience - in a homelike atmosphere and vintage style - that is superior to on-line shopping. In its communication, Modemakers chose, among other things, to use its own photography that highlights the experience in each of their stores – rather than the usual stock photographs offered by the clothing brands. This has an impact on IT, and storage capacity became the bottleneck. Modemakers relied on partner ePact to find a storage solution that offered more capacity in a stable environment and, at the same time, was easy to manage. The ideal solution became clear: VMware vSAN (for ROBO).

Fashion for everyone, with a focus on customer experience

Like any Small & Medium Business (SMB), Modemakers started small. CEO Patrick D'Eer started his first clothing shop in Puurs in 1986. Since then, Modemakers has expanded to a chain of 11 stores. The aim of the group is to be a stable player in the sector, with a regional orientation and a focus on the physical shops. The group currently has a turnover of 25 million euros and employs around 100 people.

For Modemakers, IT is a strategic capability that supports the company's unique customer value, and is critical to make the heart of the business run smoothly. "The process has priority over technology," says IT-manager Giovanni Govaerts. "So, we won't just follow the hype like e.g. a 3D digital fitting room. On the one hand, this is not economical (it's a huge investment with for us little extra revenue), and on the other hand, delivering a shopping experience in a comfortable homely vintage setting that differentiates us from competitors is important to our customers."

Storage capacity becomes bottleneck

Prior to implementing VMware vSAN, storage was becoming an issue. "In order to show our own style on our website and every marketing asset, we consciously use more than just the stock photos offered by the clothing brands. Our photographers take pictures of every

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Modemakers is a fashion retailer in Belgium (Flanders) that focuses on local presence and a unique shopping experience. Modemakers has 11 shops and is headquartered in Temse. They are a multi-brand store that sells clothes for women, men and children. www.modemakers.be

INDUSTRY

Retail (Fashion)

HEADQUARTERS

Temse, Belgium

VMWARE FOOTPRINT

VMware vSphere®
 VMware vSAN™
 VMware vCenter Server®
 Dell vSAN Ready Nodes



garment put together in an ensemble in our shops,” says Giovanni. Photo storage has grown exponentially in recent years, growing beyond the capabilities of the existing system.

Modemakers has a small IT team but still requires big IT results to remain competitive. And because of the team’s limited size, any new solution must be easy to manage while still being stable. Modemaker isn’t willing to sacrifice capabilities in the name of ease-of-use, so the solution must still deliver class-leading performance that enables the business to keep up with market demands.

Further, the existing system was at the end of its 6-year lifespan. Problems arose, such as painfully slow access and lagging application performance that don’t open fast. “The previous IT environment was fairly traditional and was hardware dependent. Some things were still possible, but it was not possible to map out a path to the cloud,” explains Christof Ugau, Solution Architect and managing partner at partner ePact.

Lean & Mean: Affordable simplicity with VMware vSAN

The new system had to be performant and Modemakers also had a strong preference for proven market-leading brands. And of course, the solution would have to be very easy to manage. Giovanni: “This is an important trend in the market. IT managers no longer want to spend too much time on the day-to-day management of servers, so they are opting for user-friendly solutions.”

For such adaptations and larger projects, Modemakers always



relies on integrator ePact, their trusted IT partner for more than 15 years. On their advice, the old VMware vSphere 5.5 solution was replaced by a more recent version of vSphere (6.7) and supplemented with vSAN 6.7 and a vSAN Remote Office Branch Office license (ROBO 25 VM pack). Christof Ugau: “This proves that this solution can also be interesting for smaller customers. After all, everyone has to go along with the digitization.” Everything was installed on Dell vSAN Ready nodes. The environment is fully redundant, with a stretched vSAN setup. This means that if a server were to fail – months before there was once a power outage in the neighborhood with an impact on the server - there would be no effect on the business. With the new solution, Modemakers almost doubled storage capacity. “This software solution gives Modemakers also more flexibility and a vision towards the cloud,” says Christof Ugau.

The role of partner ePact in the process should not be underestimated. “Building a narrow relationship takes time and money. ePact knows us and we know them, so there is a lot of mutual trust. And of course, they have the necessary expertise in VMware solutions to bring such a project to a successful conclusion”, says Giovanni Govaerts. The implementation went step-by-step but very smoothly. “The most far-reaching action was the migration of the file servers. But we were able to implement everything during office hours. I think we had a maximum of 1 hour of downtime, but our employees barely noticed it.”

“For me, as an IT manager, simple management is the great added value of vSAN. For our users that - unnoticed - they can at least maintain their efficiency and productivity.”

GIOVANNI GOVAERTS
IT MANAGER, MODEMAKERS

More flexibility and business continuity assured

With a VMware Hyperconverged Infrastructure (HCI) solution on Dell Technologies hardware (Dell vSAN Ready Nodes), Modemakers can simplify how they manage infrastructure now, and have flexibility to easily make changes to support future business need. For Modemakers, simplicity of management was the most important. “The simplicity of management that we were already familiar with from VMware vSphere is now also reflected in the VMware vSAN solution. This allows us to manage our storage very easily and centrally from the familiar VMware vCenter Server management tool,” says Giovanni Govaerts.

The new solution also makes the systems more efficient. Workloads are faster ROI-wise, the approach of this investment

was mainly preventive: a more stable and efficient system to avoid possible downtime.

“It is the software defined infrastructure solution from vSAN that offers Modemakers more flexibility and enables a trajectory to the cloud. The upgraded on-premise data centre enables Modemakers to run everything in the cloud. If there is a problem tomorrow, Modemakers will be back up and running in the cloud in just one day”, says Christof Ugau, managing partner of ePact.



Looking ahead

In the short term, Modemakers - partly due to COVID-19 - is looking into developing a webshop. Technology is in place but the challenge is the logistics process: internal processing of orders, preparation for shipment, the shipment, returned goods.

Migrating everything to the cloud is certainly not an option in the short term. “For the time being, I don’t see any added value in it. We currently have one office, with few people who must work from home. But suppose we grow to 50 shops or make a takeover and have more than 50 office workers, then it might be a solution. And the current solution allows us to make that change quickly”.



Technology should support the business processes. And especially in a SMB, simple management is crucial for the limited IT teams. Discover how Modemakers could achieve this with [@vmwarevsan](https://twitter.com/vmwarevsan)