

WildBlue Accelerates Application Delivery and Avoids \$1 Million in Capital Expenditure with Skytap

» A company that is growing as fast as WildBlue requires an IT team that can keep pace with the business. WildBlue delivers affordable two-way broadband Internet access via satellite to homes and small businesses and is signing up hundreds of new customers a day. Its internal development team is tasked with delivering the new applications required to support this growth, including provisioning and managing its satellite services. WildBlue adopted Skytap to solve bottlenecks in its development process and saved \$1 million in upfront capital expenditures by switching to a cloud-based service for its virtualized IT infrastructure.

Situation

WildBlue delivers affordable two-way broadband Internet access via satellite to homes and small businesses in small cities and rural areas. WildBlue launched its service in June 2005 aboard the Anik F2 satellite and has since experienced rapid growth serving the approx. 10 to 15 million U.S. homes that don't have access to high speed Internet. WildBlue relies on its 40 person IT team to deliver the applications that support this growth, including the internal business systems for provisioning, billing and managing accounts.

Mike Casullo, the CIO at WildBlue, has long been an advocate of outsourcing IT services that are not core intellectual property for the business. Casullo recognized that cloud computing could be used to solve some of the pressing challenges his team was facing. He spoke to Todd Lewis, the Sr. Director of IT, and recommended Lewis explore cloud services, to see if they could improve WildBlue's software quality and delivery process.

Lewis' development and QA teams had recently been struggling to keep up with the quantity of new applications and change requests generated by the business. One of the main challenges Lewis wanted to solve was the availability of testing environments to ensure software was adequately tested. Given the internal IT organization was primarily focused on keeping production systems running, testing had become a bottleneck due to the five week lead time to provision test environments. Ideally, Lewis was looking for a solution that would enable to team to:

- Gain self-service access to virtualized environments, thus avoiding IT operations delays
- Scale up testing resources during the end-game of a software release
- Integrate with onsite Web services and applications to enable end-to-end system testing

» CUSTOMER PROFILE

WildBlue delivers affordable two-way broadband Internet access via satellite to homes and small businesses.

» CHALLENGES

- Business initiatives constrained by IT delivery timelines
- Testing a bottleneck for releasing new software
- Excess demand for existing test and development environments
- Complex test matrices and test cases
- Limited IT operations support for application development

» SOLUTION

WildBlue adopted Skytap for application development and testing using a 'virtual private cloud' model.

» BENEFITS

- Avoided \$1 million in capital expenses
- Cut development iteration cycle time by 25%
- Increased scope of test cases and test coverage
- Shortened set-up and tear-down time for new environments by over 90% (2 days vs. 5.5 weeks)
- Increased customer feedback during design phases

» CUSTOMER HIGHLIGHTS

"We're buying an SLA with Skytap. We are no longer suffer delays caused by an inefficient IT provisioning process and our IT lab costs are more than 60% lower with Skytap."

Mike Casullo, CIO, WildBlue

"Skytap gives our development team self-service access to virtual environments in the cloud. We can now deliver software 25% faster and ensure comprehensive test coverage due to the scalable, on-demand nature of the Skytap service."

Todd Lewis, Sr. Director of IT, WildBlue

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Challenges

Lewis quickly ruled out an on-site private cloud solution which would cost over \$1,000,000 in hardware, storage, cloud management software, and implementation costs. Managing an internal private cloud would require significant support and administration from the IT operations team which he knew was unlikely to be approved. In addition, the timeframe for implementing a private cloud could be up to a year.

He quickly discovered that most cloud services didn't offer the comprehensive solution he was looking for. "Most cloud providers only support a very limited subset of Windows operating systems and don't allow the import of existing virtual machine images into the cloud", said Lewis. "Another key requirement was team workflow functionality to enable our developers and testers to collaborate on software builds. Many cloud providers just offer raw virtual infrastructure, which didn't address the challenges we had."

Lewis also recognized he'd need a solution that supported a 'virtual private cloud' model whereby internal Web services and applications could be accessed to enable end-to-end system testing. "We wanted a solution that was flexible and would integrate with our existing infrastructure", said Lewis. "Ideally, you shouldn't even know you are utilizing resources in the cloud."

Solution

After more research, Lewis discovered Skytap. "Skytap is very different from other cloud providers because they provide all the benefits of the cloud, such as a utility billing model, on-demand virtual infrastructure, and the ability to scale, but they also offer a complete SaaS application for cloud automation", said Lewis. "In addition to a rich user interface and team workflow capabilities, they also offer the same industry-standard platforms we use in-house."

Lewis initially used Skytap to develop and release WildBlue's applications that enable customers to set up their satellite connection and diagnose any connection issues. "We were up and running within a week of signing up for Skytap and were able to cost effectively replicate the permutations of operating environments and configurations we find on customer's PCs", said Lewis. "Our development and testing teams successfully delivered new releases of the applications in 75% of the time we had estimated, with much broader test coverage."

After successfully completing the pilot, the team expanded the use of Skytap for development of their on-line order entry, provisioning and internal knowledge base applications.

Benefits

Since adopting Skytap, WildBlue has redefined its agile development process to take advantage of the on-demand nature of cloud resources. "We now use Skytap from initial kick-off to software deployment", said Lewis. "We've seen unexpected benefits, such as the ability for developers to work in sandbox environments and not break development work in another area of the system. And testers utilize Skytap's 'hybrid' cloud capability to connect back to on-site systems so they can execute end-to-end systems tests of our business processes. Using Skytap has significantly improved the quality of our applications and it's not unusual that we now deliver software successfully the first time, with no major bugs reported by our users."

Specific benefits WildBlue experienced with Skytap include:

- Deployed complete 'virtual private cloud' solution in less than a week (including training)
- Avoided \$1 million in capital expenses
- Cut development iteration cycle time by 25%; delivered business-critical software ahead of schedule
- Increased scope of test cases and test coverage
- Shortened set-up and tear-down time of new environments by over 90% (2 days vs. 5.5 weeks)
- Increased customer feedback during design phases

» To learn how Skytap can deliver value to your organization, contact a cloud computing expert at sales@skytap.com or call us at +1 (888) 759-8278

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