

Executive Summary

Challenge

Offer best-of-breed, white-label Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) to clients over public, private, and hybrid cloud networks

Solution

- ExtremeSwitching™ VDX 6740
- Extreme MLXe Series
- Extreme NetTron CER 2000 Series

Results

- Introduced private, public, and hybrid cloud services that can scale and evolve to meet ever-changing customer requirements
- Saved approximately \$20,000 annually on cabling and other infrastructure costs while simplifying management
- Achieved return on investment in only 11 months
- Increased performance capacity to offer 10 times the bandwidth at one-third the cost



Faction Goes to the Cloud and Rises above the Competition

Denver, Colorado-based Faction focuses on the Infrastructure as a Service (IaaS) piece of the cloud puzzle, delivering public, private, hybrid, and disaster recovery solutions for channel partners. According to Robert Darrow, VP of Operations at Faction, the company is exclusively focused on the channel. Selling Faction's cloud services as their own, resellers and agents rapidly enter the cloud marketplace under their own brand without capital expenditure. "Our partners have Fortune 10 and Fortune 100 companies on our private cloud, and we're seeing an increase among companies whose business or technology decisions are mandated by HIPAA or other requirements, particularly around disaster recovery," says Darrow.

Darrow adds that Faction provides the underlying compute, storage, and network platforms for enterprises to deploy applications such as Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) and disaster recovery, and offers its clients an SSAE 16/SAS 70 Type II-compliant infrastructure.

To accommodate this array of requirements, Faction needed a solid network infrastructure and the ability to virtualize its data center. In fact, Faction is one of the first cloud infrastructure companies in North America to achieve the VMware vCloud Powered designation—given to qualifying members of the VMware Service Provider Program—for its cloud service offerings.

Bringing Data to the Clouds

During the past three years, Faction experienced more than 400 percent growth. It has cloud nodes spanning eight geographies across the United States and in Europe, connected with redundant 10 Gbps circuits. To support this continued growth, Faction needed to purchase a "bulletproof" infrastructure that could deliver secure and robust services to its clients.

“We wanted a network infrastructure that could accommodate our explosive growth and ever-increasing client demands, while providing that in a secure, high-performance environment,” says Darrow. “Additionally, we needed the agility to deploy network resources today and subsequently update or refine their footprint on-demand, staying ahead of ever-changing customer requirements.”

Faction selected a suite of products from Extreme after evaluating various solutions from competitors. The Extreme solution— which essentially replaces gear from Cisco and Juniper Networks in the core of Faction’s network—includes Extreme VDX® 6740 Switches at all four data centers. These switches utilize Extreme VCS® Fabric technology, which provides an intelligent foundation for building data center Ethernet fabrics and streamlines the transition to cloud computing.

“We looked at what we needed to support our business and our clients into the future, and Extreme provided that with minimum disruption and maximum capabilities.”

Luke Norris
Founder and CEO, Faction

In addition, Extreme MLXe and Extreme NetIron® CER 2000 Series routers provide Internet connectivity, while the virtual router and firewall deliver security at the VM level for individual customers.

Nothing But Clear Skies

Extreme VDX switches allow Faction to reduce its cabling from a mix of 10 Gigabit Ethernet (GbE) and 1 GbE cables to two 10 GbE cables. This decrease in cabling has also led to fewer headaches when managing such a dense cloud computing environment.

Darrow estimates that the company is saving approximately \$20,000 annually on cabling, cable managers, switches, rack space, and labor—in addition to the power savings from using Extreme network equipment.

Moreover, Darrow estimates that Faction can offer 10 times the bandwidth for one-third the cost. “Extreme is known for its ability to move high volumes of data in a high-bandwidth, secure environment. This has enabled us to see a return on investment in just 11 short months,” he says.

According to Norris, the primary reason for selecting Extreme was its ability to provide a smooth transition to a new, future-proof infrastructure. “We looked at what we needed to support our business and our clients into the future, and Extreme Network Subscription provided that with minimum disruption and maximum capabilities,” he says.

“It’s the best combination of computing storage and communications capabilities with the agility we require,” adds Norris. Had Faction stayed with Cisco, Norris estimates a similar solution would have had term commitments and cost four to five times more.

Norris also points out that virtualizing the data center has allowed his company to do much more with less. “Moving forward, standardizing on Extreme shows we’re picking a best-of-breed solution with the best price/performance,” he says.

Norris adds that the comprehensive Extreme Ethernet fabric strategy, based on Transparent Interconnect of Lots of Links (TRILL), is extremely valuable to Faction. “By transitioning to a cloud-optimized network built on Extreme VCS Fabric technology, we are able to expand much more rapidly and respond to support issues faster and more predictably than environments using the legacy Spanning Tree Protocol,” he explains.



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