

Parallels® Virtuozzo Containers

Customer Success Story

Disaster Recovery for Online Pharmacy

Pharmacy2U uses Parallels Virtuozzo Containers to ensure minimal disruption to customers in the event of any problems in the data center.

Business Challenge

As an online pharmacy filling NHS (National Health Service) and private prescriptions as well as serving 250 general practice surgeries across the UK, it is essential that Pharmacy2U has an effective disaster recovery solution in place to ensure there is no interruption to the services they provide. While the company's e-commerce site is externally hosted, the servers used to connect to the surgeries are located in house, along with servers running vital communications and Customer Relationship Management (CRM) systems.

"In our service-based industry it's vital that we're able to respond to customers as quickly as possible. As such, we needed a disaster recovery strategy that would allow us to continue working even when we can't get into our offices," says Steven Dobson, head of IT for Pharmacy2U.

As the business has already seen rapid growth in the data center since launching in 1999, Dobson wanted to find a solution without simply continuing to add more and more boxes ramping up management and operating costs. He made the decision to look for a combination of new hardware and software to maximize the return on new and prior investment. Using virtualization technology enables Pharmacy2U to increase the efficiency of its existing servers, and provides the disaster recovery solution needed.

"Using Parallels Virtuozzo Containers enables us to kill two birds with one stone: freeing up spare servers by consolidating our existing hardware, and enabling a disaster recovery implementation with back-ups that require a very small transfer time," adds Dobson.

Evaluation

During the selection process, Pharmacy2U ran pilots of tools from both Parallels and VMware. After evaluating both, Parallels Virtuozzo Containers was chosen for speed, ease of use and return-on-investment

Dobson comments, "On top of that, the price comparison was strongly in Parallels' favor, so it wasn't a particularly tough decision."

"As this project was primarily about finding the best disaster recovery solution we could, it was important that the solution we chose delivered the least interruption to service possible. During the pilot of Parallels Virtuozzo Containers it was really striking how rapidly we could bring everything back online. Switching from one server to another would take no time at all and users wouldn't even need to know that they'd been moved. Where can you build a machine from scratch and have it up and running in minutes?"



delivering health

About Pharmacy2U

Pharmacy2U is the largest mail order and online pharmacy in the UK. We have a range of innovative pharmaceutical services including:

- Online access to thousands of medicines, health and beauty products, fine fragrances and exclusive skincare ranges with many at reduced prices compared with the high street.
- NHS and Private prescription dispensing service including the ability to manage repeat private prescriptions online. All private prescriptions are offered at highly competitive prices when compared with the high street. Visit www.pharmacy2u.co.uk for more information.

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Head of IT
Pharmacy2U

Parallels Virtuozzo Containers Solution and Implementation

Pharmacy2U is using Parallels Virtuozzo Containers to virtualize its e-mail and CRM applications. The servers that have been freed up in the consolidation have been moved off-site as part of the company's disaster recovery strategy. Using the Parallels Virtuozzo Containers software, every night the virtual environments are backed up to another server kept in a separate location. This offers a simple, incremental back up, sent as one file across the network.

Parallels' partner, Line 3 Internet, handled the Parallels Virtuozzo Containers installation. The implementation includes Parallels Virtuozzo Containers management software, which enables Pharmacy2U to control numerous virtual environments across multiple servers from one centralized interface. Both Linux and Windows versions of Parallels Virtuozzo Containers are used since the online pharmacy runs the Linux OS on HP Compaq servers for e-mail and CRM applications, and Windows OS on a server used for testing and development purposes.

Results

"Put simply, with Parallels Virtuozzo Containers we really have seen a lot more servers on a lot less hardware. We were initially a little worried that running applications in virtual environments would erode the performance, but it really doesn't feel that way when you're using them, and we're now getting much more efficiency out of our existing boxes," says Dobson.

"The main aim was always to have a reliable and effective disaster recovery solution, and with Parallels Virtuozzo Containers we really feel we've achieved this. Essentially, if our systems do go down, I have the security of knowing that switching to the back-up server will take no time at all and end-users will experience the minimum disruption possible."

"Parallels Virtuozzo Containers provided better performance than other virtual systems and we found VMware rather clunky."

"On top of that, it's really easy for us to add more virtual servers onto our existing machines at no extra cost, and we can provide remote disaster recovery for them at the same time. We've essentially future-proofed ourselves from having to shell out for a more expensive option when we need to add a new function or host a new site."

Future plans

Dobson comments, "There's an awful lot of buzz around the benefits of virtualization at the moment, but my attitude was really a bit *I'll believe it when I see it*. Now I have, and I just feel like I want to put everything on there now."

Pharmacy2U plans to expand its use of virtualization technology to other parts of its infrastructure, such as the server running the unique prescriptions service. Dobson is also investigating the possibility of implementing Parallels Virtuozzo Containers on the servers hosting their e-commerce sites.

Learn more at www.parallels.com/virtuozzo

Parallels Virtuozzo Containers Solutions:

- **Server and OS Consolidation**
- **Business Continuity (HA/DR)**
- Centralized Desktop Management
- Dynamic Workload Management
- Internal and Commercial Hosting
- Development and Testing

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Applications

- email
- CRM



660 sw 39th street
suite 205
renton, wa 98057
USA
main +1 425 282 6400
fax + 1 425 282 6444

13755 sunrise valley drive
suite 600
herndon, va 20171
USA
main +1 703 815 5670
fax +1 703 815 5675

www.parallels.com