

Obeo Runs its Business on the CenturyLink Cloud

KEY POINTS

CHALLENGE:

Obeo is a real estate marketing firm that wanted to focus on its core competencies, and not on maintaining hardware and software. After several outages and data losses, the company realized that instead of managing its own IT environment, it wanted to concentrate on providing top-notch virtual tour services to the real estate industry.

SOLUTION:

CenturyLink manages Obeo's mission-critical back office applications, as well as the firm's entire, live production environment and 25 different servers. Customer-facing web portals and applications — such as the 360-degree virtual tours — are expertly run on the CenturyLink Cloud platform, leveraging Microsoft SQL Server Clusters for high availability and scaling.

IMPACT:

CenturyLink Cloud's web-based management control panel allows Obeo to run its network and various servers, and gives it the power to beef up specific servers and create new ones on the fly. Obeo has reduced operational complexity and increased its agility while reducing costs associated with software, hardware and dedicated expert technology employees.

OVERVIEW

For more than 10 years, leading virtual home tours provider Obeo has been developing targeted solutions for the real estate industry. New homes, existing homes, rental properties and commercial properties each require different tools to effectively entice the target markets that are shopping for real estate. From virtual tours for Realtors, work progress photos and community websites for homebuilders to the newly-introduced “consumer interactive virtual home staging product”, Obeo has the solutions that help real estate professionals succeed in a competitive industry.

TECHNOLOGY'S CRITICAL ROLE

In the virtual tour industry, Obeo is a leader in using technology to get homes sold fast. In addition to its virtual tour technology, the company offers marketing, sales and syndication expertise that users rely on to sell their homes with less effort and hassle. Among Obeo's unique tools are its vStager virtual staging and redecorating tool, which allows buyers to see what specific homes would look like with different wall coverings, paint and flooring as well as different furniture styles. Technology plays a critical role in Obeo's operations, and supports everything that it does. Its image database alone is populated with over 10 million files that are accessed and/or uploaded by millions of visitors and users who rely on the site to publish virtual tours and sell homes.

At first, Obeo tried to cover the IT bases on its own. “We attempted to be experts in the hardware side of our company to support our true core competency of idea and interactive web development, but we ran into numerous problems supporting the hardware. This actually sucked capacity out of our creative and web development core competencies,” says Glade Jones, Obeo's co-founder and CEO. After several outages and critical data losses, the company went in search of a third party to protect, manage and host the company's crown jewels.

CREATING A COMPREHENSIVE PLATFORM

After shopping around for solutions, Obeo selected CenturyLink for its comprehensive enterprise cloud platform, which runs all of the virtual tour provider's mission-critical core business applications in a flexible environment. This enables them to focus on their core business and agile development (meeting customer demands faster).

CenturyLink manages Obeo's entire, live production environment and back office systems, which comprises 25 different servers. Customer-facing web portals and applications — such as the 360-degree virtual tours and vStager — are run on the CenturyLink Cloud platform, leveraging Microsoft SQL Server Clusters for high availability and scaling. Alongside Lab and Development environments, CenturyLink runs Obeo's mission-critical back office applications such as accounting functionality and its Exchange and Active Directory servers — the heartbeat of 50,000 plus agents who count on it for critical messaging.

With user traffic growing year over year, and new features and software updates being released constantly, Obeo possesses an agility that no other virtual tour provider can touch. By integrating CenturyLink's Cloud into its operations, the company can rest easy knowing that its mission-critical applications are stable, and flexible enough to handle an on-demand environment with associated spikes and bursts.

"Our entire business depends on CenturyLink Cloud," says Andy Evans, Obeo's founder and CTO, "it pretty much runs everything for us, so that we don't have to."

To make testing easier for Obeo, CenturyLink also manages programmer source code and their lab and development environment, which resolves any hardware compatibility issues and also enables the flexibility to spin up environments as needed. As a result, the company can conduct constant development in an agile, flexible environment where it can be assured that customer demands will be met and exceeded before they go live.

"All of our development takes place in the CenturyLink Cloud lab environment," says Evans, "where we can make sure everything works before it's ready to publish to our production servers."

BENEFITS OF AN ENTERPRISE CLOUD PLATFORM

For Obeo to duplicate what CenturyLink Cloud provides, the company would have to buy software licenses, purchase hardware and dedicate expert technology employees to architecting and managing the system. "CenturyLink took the IT off of our shoulders, and expertly manages our technology infrastructure and critical communication tools," says Jones, "while letting us concentrate on what we do best."

Obeo's relationship with CenturyLink runs deep. The two companies have worked together to hone the virtual tour provider's platform and ensure that it continues to meet the needs of the growing firm. "There have been times when I needed immediate help," says Jones, "and I had an answer to my inquiry to CenturyLink literally within seconds."

Evans says CenturyLink's web-based management control panel allows him to run the firm's network and various servers, and gives him the power to beef up specific servers and create new ones on the fly to manage a new marketing campaign, for example. "Being able to do that quickly, from the management control portal makes my life a lot easier," says Evans.

Through the CenturyLink Cloud implementation, Obeo was able to replace its internal phone system with one that is managed on the platform. "We were dealing with some pretty severe network challenges, and the new platform eradicated those challenges," says Evans, who enjoys the fact that CenturyLink picks up on challenges and issues before the Obeo team even catches onto them.

"Many times, they know about the problem before we do," Jones adds. "The typical CenturyLink response is, 'We are on it, and it will be fixed shortly.' That level of support is invaluable when you're like us, with thousands of clients relying on your system."

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— Glade Jones
Obeo's co-founder and CEO

ABOUT CENTURYLINK CLOUD

CenturyLink Cloud, from CenturyLink Technology Solutions, is the complete platform to easily manage your entire business application portfolio, from development to business-critical workloads. CenturyLink Cloud offers high-performance, scalable, self-service virtual machines across our global network of data centers, including Hyperscale instances for distributed workloads that require maximum performance. And CenturyLink Cloud provides built-in automation, orchestration, and management tools for an IT-ready and developer-friendly platform that is flexible, scalable, cost effective and highly manageable. For more information, visit www.ctli.io

ABOUT CENTURYLINK TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS

CenturyLink Technology Solutions delivers innovative managed services for global businesses on virtual, dedicated and collocation platforms. It is a global leader in cloud infrastructure and hosted IT solutions for enterprise customers. Parent company CenturyLink, Inc. is the third-largest telecommunications company in the United States, and empowers CenturyLink Technology Solutions with its high-quality advanced fiber optic network. Headquartered in Monroe, La., CenturyLink is an S&P 500 company and is included among the Fortune 500 list of America's largest corporations. For more information, visit www.centurylink.com/technology.