



Private Cloud for Leading Canadian Helicopter Company

Airbus Helicopters Canada expands cloud with virtualization expertise from Sentia



Next time you see a helicopter flying overhead, it could be one built by Airbus Helicopters Canada, the world’s largest designer and manufacturer of civil and military helicopters. These engineering marvels are used for a vast range of missions and applications, including passenger and cargo transport, aerial photography, law enforcement, training, rescue, firefighting, scouting, and more.

Airbus Helicopters Canada supplies one third of the world’s helicopter fleet. Meeting the needs of nearly 2,900 customers in 147 countries, they currently have over 11,000 helicopters in the air.

Airbus Helicopters Canada (AHC), operating in Canada since 1984 is a subsidiary of Airbus Helicopters Canada. AHC’s Canadian facilities include their head office and manufacturing site in Fort Erie, Ontario, and Customer Support Centers in Richmond, British Columbia and Montreal, Quebec.

In the technologically advanced aerospace industry, AHC was on the lookout for ways to remain competitive and continue to deliver best-in-class service to their customers - no matter where. AHC customers are widespread across Canada’s broad geography, with some located in remote, difficult to access areas.

Jeff Smith, IT Manager at AHC explains their challenges from a technology perspective, “Quick and reliable access to critical information from multiple locations and sources was a key requirement in order for us to solve these business issues. Also important was high systems availability across several times zones. And as time goes on, we’ll have to provide connectivity to more remote users and support for various mobile devices.”

AHC needed a virtualization expert to help architect and grow their private cloud environment. That’s where Sentia, an IBM Premier Business Partner came in.

“Sentia has extensive virtualization expertise in the areas of implementation, ongoing system growth architecture, support, hardware and software,” says Chris Charette, Vice President, Sales at Sentia. “We proposed a complete solution - servers, storage and software – required to run a private cloud for AHC that was robust and scalable enough to handle all users, everywhere.”

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Jeff Smith,
IT Management,
Airbus Helicopters Canada

The solution architected by Sentia gives AHC the infrastructure necessary to host a private virtual desktop cloud environment for the entire company. Since data doesn’t sit on desktops, AHC’s proprietary, mission-critical data is stored securely, minimizing risk.

The virtualized server infrastructure provides a secure testing and development environment in which to rapidly deploy new applications.

Cloud expansion for competitive edge

Airbus Helicopters Canada (AHC) offers a wide range of multi-purpose helicopters, from light single-engine models to twin-engine aircraft. AHC manufactures numerous components for the global Airbus Helicopters Canada fleet, runs a Transport Canada certified training centre, and helps customers extend the service life of their helicopters with comprehensive repair and overhaul services.

The reasons for AHC's virtualization initiative? As new users come on board and new applications come online, additional hardware and software is required to stay on course with demands. Ongoing rapid deployment of technology is key to keeping the business running smoothly.

"Historically, we've been a thin client environment. We were looking to expand our technology into a virtualized desktop infrastructure (VDI) and avoid a mass purchase of PCs," states Mr. Smith. "The ability to deploy user environments and change desktop configurations ad hoc with minimal preparation time was important, as was the ability to modify storage on the fly. Upgrading and changing hardware with minimal or no downtime was critical," he adds.

"We no longer spend time worrying about hardware and downtime issues; now we can focus on improvement projects. Back office redundancy, seamless maintenance, and built-in disaster recovery functionality are big pluses for AHC."

Jeff Smith, IT Manager, Airbus Helicopters Canada

Vanguard of virtualization

AHC considered vendors based on their experience with virtualization and cloud computing, their ability to implement a phased solution with minimal impact to the business, and the best utilization of their existing technology investment.

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Secure, flexible infrastructure

Due to the involvement of software specialists, the implementation timeframe was sensitive. "With consultants lined up to install the ERP system, we had a drop dead date. Sentia gave us their word on a delivery date and that was a huge service to us," says Mr. Dayno. "Sentia completed the installation in less than three weeks, enabling our ERP consultants to load the software application."

High ROI, greater functionality

AHC has experienced notable advantages with their new and improved private cloud environment.

AHC is enjoying significant benefits as a result of using IBM equipment. Mr. Smith comments, "IBM technology is highly reliable and their support is incredible. We're getting high utilization of our hardware investments."

Thinking without limits

AHC is at the forefront of technology. They plan to stay in the lead through continued investments in virtualization and cloud computing, including extension of their virtualized desktop infrastructure to remote users, and enabling device autonomy.

The sky's the limit.



Virtualization Solution by
Sentia, an IBM Premier
Business Partner

Featuring:

- IBM BladeCenter®
- IBM Storwize® V7000
- Sentia Architecture and Implementation Services