



Phoenix NAP®, a VMware vCloud Service Provider, Enables SureTax® to Provide Secure, Highly Available Tax Calculation Services

INDUSTRY

IT services

LOCATION

Atlanta, Georgia

KEY CHALLENGES

- Obtain hardware and management expertise to grow business rapidly
- Offer IaaS with managed, virtualized hardware
- Meet the needs of large enterprise clients demanding software hosted on private clouds

SOLUTION

SureTax chose the Flexible Data Center Solutions platform from Phoenix NAP, which uses VMware solutions such as vCloud® Suite, vSphere®, and vCenter™ Operations Manager and supports the secure virtualization and management requirements of SureTax's growing client base.

BENEFITS

- Launched virtualized cloud solution that manages client tax calculation systems with high performance, availability, and privacy
- Realized return on investment in less than two years
- Created foundation for business growth and expansion into new markets

To keep pace with rapid business growth without making a costly investment in computing hardware, SureTax engaged the Flexible Data Center Solutions platform by Phoenix NAP, an infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS) provider offering cloud services based on VMware vCloud® technologies. SureTax, which provides enterprises with real-time software-as-a-service tax calculations, used the private cloud and virtualized solutions to meet the privacy, performance, and high availability needs of its growing client base while realizing a rapid return on investment.

SureTax provides tax calculation solutions for some of the world's largest communications companies. Based in Atlanta, Georgia, the company helps its clients ensure they accurately deliver customer invoices with appropriate sales and communications taxes. SureTax, which partners with CCH, a Wolters Kluwer business, serves approximately 300 clients around the world.

The Challenge

With its recognized leadership in sales and telecommunications tax calculation software, SureTax's business has been growing rapidly. "Our software is critical to the businesses of our clients," says Mike Sanders, chief product strategist for SureTax. "If our clients cannot calculate tax, they cannot produce invoices and generate revenue."

Yet the expanding client base created a need for a larger IT infrastructure—and managing a growing distributed hardware environment required SureTax to bring in expertise. "I did not want our team to deal with hardware and underlying platform issues," says Sanders. "It became obvious that we needed a partner to provide a dedicated hardware infrastructure that would support high availability and rapid throughput for the huge volumes of data we process."

Another challenge for SureTax was creating a dedicated solution that would meet the throughput and security requirements of its enterprise clients. "Large enterprises that process millions of transactions each month typically do not want an environment where resources might be shared," says Sanders. "To meet their needs, we were looking for a hosted solution that ensured scalability and privacy. We needed to work with a partner that could help us design, procure, and manage the appropriate hardware stack. Considering our rapid growth, we also needed a provider that would work with us to develop a strategy that could expand with our business."

“Our new infrastructure helps us reliably meet clients’ service-level requirements, which creates high customer satisfaction.”

Mike Sanders
Chief Product Strategist,
SureTax

VMWARE FOOTPRINT

- VMware vCloud Suite
- VMware vSphere
- VMware vCenter Operations Manager
- VMware vCloud® Networking and Security™

APPLICATIONS VIRTUALIZED

- CCH SureTax Telecom
- Microsoft Active Directory
- Microsoft SQL Enterprise

PLATFORM

- Brocade routing and switching
- SuperMicro virtualization hosts
- Nexenta software-defined storage

PARTNER

Phoenix NAP

The Solution

After consulting with several IaaS providers, SureTax chose the Phoenix NAP Flexible Data Center Solutions platform. The wholly managed virtualization environment runs in the provider’s Phoenix facility and uses VMware® solutions, including VMware vCloud Suite, VMware vSphere® software, and the VMware vCenter™ Operations Manager™ components. Because SureTax had previously used colocation services from Phoenix NAP, Sanders was familiar with its facilities, infrastructure, and approach.

“Phoenix NAP showed greater willingness to bring in the right people, tailor a solution to meet our needs, and deliver it at a lower price point than the competition,” he says. “Other vendors offered fixed solutions and charged extra for customization. I feel like we achieved the best of all worlds with Phoenix NAP.”

Freeing SureTax to focus on its area of expertise—software-as-a-service tax calculation—was important to Phoenix NAP. “We have the experience and skills to manage the hardware in-house,” says William Bell, vice president of product development for Phoenix NAP. “By using cloud platform solutions from VMware, we could meet the service-level, security, and privacy requirements of SureTax’s clients. And because our infrastructure is built on commodity hardware, we could pass on significant savings to the customer.”

Phoenix NAP developed a custom VMware-based infrastructure that supports availability, uptime, redundancy, throughput, and growth. “Now we can create customer-specific versions of SureTax by simply deploying an instance of the software,” says Sanders. “Since Phoenix NAP adheres to industry security and compliance standards, it makes it even easier to sell our dedicated solution to large and enterprise prospects.”

Business Benefits

The new hardware infrastructure helps SureTax quickly and efficiently provide customized tax calculation services to clients. “With VMware, we can use templates to rapidly create instances of a system,” says Sanders. “We also run copies in sandboxes, build test copies, and create instances for special customer projects.” The technology platform also allows SureTax to connect to Phoenix NAP’s Ashburn, Virginia, data center supporting the company’s disaster recovery strategy.

The solution has also delivered financial value. SureTax realized its return on investment in less than two years. “That seems fast, and it doesn’t take into account the opportunity costs we have recovered,” says Sanders. “Before, we needed staff, on-call personnel, and physical trips to the colocation facility to manage the burden of being both hardware and software masters. It’s hard to quantify the value of not having to do those things anymore. We received a significant bang for the buck by implementing this new platform.”

The VMware-based cloud platform plays a key role in SureTax’s success. “Our new infrastructure helps us reliably meet clients’ service-level requirements, which creates high customer satisfaction levels,” says Sanders. “As we grow our business, we know Phoenix NAP services and VMware capabilities will be integral to our success.”

As more companies sell products and services, such as tracking devices that are subject to communications taxes, SureTax is poised to easily bring them on as clients. The virtualized infrastructure can scale to meet the needs of a growing customer base, and the responsive service of Phoenix NAP helps SureTax quickly meet new client requirements.

Looking Ahead

In addition to using Phoenix NAP’s facility in Virginia as another data recovery site, SureTax plans to expand its relationship with the IaaS provider and its use of VMware products and services to serve companies in new markets.

