

CASE STUDY

Convergence Solutions Creates a Competitive Advantage With Connectria Partnership



Challenge

Convergence Solutions needed to find a managed hosting provider that could help them move their on-premises solutions for the natural gas and utility industries to a SaaS deployment model.

Selection Criteria

- Security
- Responsive
- A provider their customers could trust

Solution/Platform

- Managed VMWare HA
- Private hosted cloud

Results

Offering a SaaS solution has helped strengthen Convergence Solutions' competitive advantage, and Connectria has become an important component of every sales presentation.

Convergence Solutions LLC is a leading provider of Natural Gas Transportation and Customer Choice Management solutions. Formed in 2011 to specifically address Natural Gas Retail Access/Customer Choice solutions, Convergence Solutions brings together the most experienced Natural Gas management software development team in the industry. Since 1995, this team has been applying their deep operational expertise to analyze business operations and develop software solutions in support of Natural Gas deregulation at the retail level. Gas Tracking System (GTS) is a SaaS-based offering that provides an interactive web portal which allows natural gas utilities, marketers/escos, suppliers, pipelines, and customers to communicate and manage daily and monthly operations via one system.

The Challenge

Convergence Solutions had been offering its solutions for the natural gas and utility industries via a traditional on-premises deployment model since 1995. As utility business models changed and international acquisitions and mergers became common place, so did the utility industry's IT department services. In 2012 faced with shrinking IT resources and new IT personnel, one of Convergence's customers shared concerns about the management priorities of in-house systems. David Bridge, Co-founder and President of Convergence Solutions, and their IT leadership were already researching the emerging trend of SaaS as an alternative to the in-house deployment of its GTS software and proposed the concept of a hosted solution to the customer. After presenting the idea with some high-level concepts, the customer's response: "Let's do it!"

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Convergence's goal in developing a SaaS model for their GTS solution included delivering their software on a reliable, extremely secured and responsive infrastructure to complement its highly rated customer and application support. With this in mind and some initial research into SaaS, Convergence decided to leverage the expertise of a hosting company to build a solution to offer its customer. Bridge and his team needed to find a reputable hosting partner ASAP. Bridge got on the phone and started making some calls.

One of the primary concerns was the location of the data and the support personnel. "We serve the energy industry, so naturally many of our customers are sensitive to where their data is housed," said Bridge. "We needed to be able to ensure them we were working with a reputable, U.S. based provider. And since we would be trusting our reputation to this provider, we wanted someone who would be extremely responsive to our needs as well."

Even during their selection process, Connectria stood out from the competition. "When we met with other providers, we primarily talked to sales. With Connectria, we got to meet the people we'd actually be working with on a daily basis. That made a big difference for us."

The Solution

With Connectria at the top of their list of potential providers, Convergence Solutions started working with Connectria's engineers to design the environment that would be meet Convergence Solutions' needs. For Bridge, reliability and security were key.

"Convergence Solutions had in-house virtualization experience with Windows Hyper-V, and we support that solution for many customers," said Dale Rossan, Regional Director of Cloud Computing at Connectria. "However, in their situation, we decided a VMWare High Availability Private Cloud would be the better fit."

Today, Convergence Solutions workloads are housed on multiple VMs in a VMWare HA private cloud located in Connectria's SSAE certified data centers. Along with a stable environment, Convergence Solutions receives all the benefits of Connectria's managed cloud services including monitoring of resource utilization for cost optimization, physical and cybersecurity monitoring, and routine system performance evaluations.



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The Results

Convergence Solutions' partnership with Connectria isn't something the company keeps to itself. According to Bridge, "Customers rarely ask about where their data will be housed, but I think it's because SaaS is still new to many of them, and they aren't sure what questions to ask. We help them by highlighting the benefits of SaaS as well as our solutions. Connectria is part of every sales presentation."

Cost structure is almost always at the top of the list of benefits. A SaaS solution also allows Convergence Solutions customers, many of whom are utility companies, to avoid the complicated system of chargebacks for capital investments. "Most of the organizations we work with have large, internal IT bureaucracies," said Bridge. "We're very competitive with what we charge clients compared to what they get charged by their internal organizations. We're generally able to provide our services faster and have lower response times to inquiries than what they're accustomed to seeing internally as well."

The customer who originally drove Convergence Solutions to consider a SaaS model isn't the only one having a hard time recruiting and retaining IT talent. During the sales process, the sales team talks about the benefits of software delivered as a service instead of implemented on-premises and how that can lessen the burden on their IT staff. Many of their potential customers are happy to offload responsibilities like planning system capacity, updates and upgrades, and hardware maintenance and refresh cycles.

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Convergence Solutions is looking to expand its relationship with Connectria to improve its own cost structure as well. “One of the things we’re looking at having them do is assist with managing our SQL Server environments. It’s an important responsibility and we are always looking for ways to complement our technical resources. If Connectria can assist us with database administration, we can focus our efforts on the applications themselves.”

This focus on continuous improvement is another aspect of the relationship that Bridge appreciates. “Over the years, Connectria has always reached out to discuss future needs and review our current needs to see how we can work together to improve our environments. We are continually evaluating ways to improve our client’s business processes and needs as well as our ability to support their business-critical systems, and I see our relationship with Connectria growing as we expand our client base in the natural gas and electric utility space. We will look to Connectria for additional resources and services to help us continue to provide the level of support and services that our clients have received and continue to expect.”



About Convergence Solutions, LLC

Formed in 2011, Convergence Solutions LLC is a leading provider of Natural Gas Transportation and Customer Choice Management solutions bringing together the most experienced software development team in the industry. Since 1995, Convergence Solutions’ team has worked together applying proven software development processes and professional utility expertise to analyze business operations to develop Natural Gas management solutions.

For more information visit www.cvergellc.com

About Connectria

From Fortune 100 enterprises to medium and small businesses, Connectria provides managed cloud, managed services, and compliant cloud security solutions to more than 1,000 global customers. Working as an extension of each customer’s IT team, we deliver technology-agnostic solutions consistently, with depth and breadth of engineering expertise, scalable solutions, and speed to market. Our “No Jerks Allowed®” philosophy includes flexible terms, straight-forward pricing, and custom solutions. With a culture based on integrity and an unwavering employee commitment to treating every customer with a relentless focus on satisfaction, it’s easy to do business with Connectria.



Connect with us today

Talk to one of our IT advisors by calling **800.781.7820** or reaching out to us by email: sales@connectria.com.

