SUSE

Alegri

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Industry and Location
MSP | Germany

Product and Services
SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications

60%
reduction in operating costs

30
minutes to spin up a virtual SAP S/4HANA environment

Alegri leverages SUSE to maximize savings and boost clients' digital transformation

Success Story

At-a-Glance

IT services provider Alegri wants to help clients boost business agility. One of the ways to achieve this is by making cutting-edge SAP HANA in-memory technology more accessible with a complete SAP S/4HANA solution running in the public cloud on Microsoft Azure. With SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications at the core of the offering, Alegri can deliver flexible, cost-effective SAP S/4HANA services that enable clients to react faster to changing demands.

Overview

Alegri International Group is a leading IT services provider in the DACH region, serving enterprises from a wide range of industries across Germany, Austria and Switzerland. With years of experience under its belt, Alegri offers strategic con-sulting, planning and implementation, as well as operations and training services to clients.

A certified Microsoft and SAP partner, Alegri has a strong track record and delivers professional solutions to many of the largest listed companies in Germany to support efficient business operations.

Alegri employs more than 670 people across eleven offices in Germany, Austria, Switzerland and Romania.

Challenge
Preparing for new business requirements

Organizations of all shapes and sizes, across all industries and markets, all over the world are facing new expectations from customers and also from staff. The rapid digitization of many core business processes has dramatically accelerated the pace of change. For example, busi-ness users are no longer content with waiting months or weeks for develop-ment environments of new applications and services — traditionally, this first step in many IT projects has been time-consuming to prepare and deliver.

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transformation of companies often also demands a change or extension of the existing business model. Higher levels of agility and flexibility in project management and IT operations are required to foster innovation and stay ahead of the competition. Many organizations, however, are being held back by slow planning and implementation processes due to traditional configurations with relatively static system landscapes."

Focusing on agility

Many organizations still take a very structured approach to developing and deploying new applications and services based on the waterfall model, following a strict sequence of steps from planning to delivery. But this can be a slow process, leaving IT teams unable to deliver new services at the pace the business needs them.

Mielke explains: "Failure to rapidly react to the market can mean that organizations miss out on business opportunities. Not being able to provide staff with quick insights into the latest figures can delay crucial decision-making and hinder business development substantially."

To enable its clients to react fast to new business demands, Alegri wanted to offer flexible, cloud-based services for the next-generation ERP software SAP S/4HANA. The new SAP solution simplifies data management and takes advantage of the SAP HANA database, which features in-memory data processing — enabling ad hoc reporting on real-time operational data.

Mielke comments: "With SAP HANA in-memory technology, companies can dramatically accelerate analytical workloads and improve the speed and responsiveness of operations management to boost business agility. However, SAP HANA is a resource-intensive technology, which requires powerful certified hardware — something that many organizations are unable or unwilling to invest in upfront. Other organizations might additionally lack the skills to manage the new environment."

Rather than investing in their own infrastructure, clients increasingly opt for Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) offerings in the cloud. Here, a key advantage is the ability to scale resources up and down as and when needed. However,

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many companies hesitate to move their core ERP systems into the cloud, and many service providers do not yet have extensive experience with the new technology and operations models.

Mielke sums up: "SAP software is widely used in the DACH region. In line with SAP's solution lifecycle, many companies will soon migrate to the new ERP software SAP S/4HANA. And as an IT service provider, we wanted to facilitate migration projects with a cost-effective cloud solution specifically for running SAP S/4HANA workloads. We would even go one step further, as we believe that a managed, cloud-based SAP S/4HANA service offering will make it much easier for companies to move to innovative in-memory technology — and help us to attract new business."

Solution
Leveraging strong partnerships

As a leading SAP and Microsoft consultancy, Alegri wanted to combine both areas of expertise and deliver the best

possible service to help its clients get ready for future challenges.

Mielke remarks: "We have years of experience with the Microsoft Azure cloud platform — both from client projects and from using the service ourselves. As we are satisfied with the performance and availability, Microsoft Azure was the obvious choice as the IaaS foundation for our new SAP S/4HANA service. We know that workloads on Microsoft Azure can be scaled easily, and with regard to stricter European Union data privacy and data protection regulations coming into effect soon, the ability to run systems in compliance with the new rules will also become essential."

Another important factor in choosing Microsoft Azure as the cloud platform was that many of Alegri's clients already use and trust Microsoft cloud solutions such as Office 365 to support day-to-day business operations. Mielke confirms: "Just setting up a supplier relationship with a new cloud service provider can take a while at many companies. By using an established business relationship, we can skip the basic administration

phase and get started with the project implementation right away."

Selecting an optimized platform for SAP solutions

To complete its new cloud-hosted offering for SAP S/4HANA, Alegri selected SUSE Linux Enterprise Server (SLES) for SAP Applications as the operating system for SAP applications on the Microsoft Azure cloud platform.

"Choosing SLES for SAP Applications was another easy decision for us," recalls Mielke. "SUSE is the leading platform for SAP HANA deployments on Linux, with a huge market share in Europe. It is also the operating system that SAP uses for its own SAP HANA development activities, so we have the reassurance that SUSE has a very high degree of compatibility with SAP applications. It also means that new functionalities are potentially available earlier than on other platforms, giving us and our clients a competitive edge."

SUSE runs a separate update channel for the optimized operating system platform, SLES for SAP Applications, streamlining both deployment and system maintenance, making them painless processes.

Mielke comments: "Another thing that attracted us to SLES for SAP Applications is the fact that it has been specifically optimized to run on Microsoft Azure. There are ready-to-use cloud images of SLES for SAP Applications available on Microsoft Azure, which accelerates installation and deployment."

When Alegri started its own greenfield implementation project with SAP S/4HANA, the company worked closely with SUSE and attended some training sessions to

get started. Since the initial training, Alegri has been able to implement SLES for SAP Applications independently.

"The fact that we were able to get everything up and running ourselves speaks volumes about the simplicity of the SUSE solution and its user-friendly configuration," says Mielke. "The implementation went very smoothly, and SUSE provides on-going support, so if we ever have any technical questions, we can always turn to the SUSE team for help.

"We have already witnessed the tight collaboration between the Microsoft Azure and SUSE support teams and were glad not to see any finger-pointing during the implementation, just seamless cooperation. Recently, we encountered an issue, and the SUSE team went above and beyond to help us out. We received a detailed response from SUSE support very quickly, which demonstrated excellent understanding of Microsoft Azure technology. We really were very impressed with the quality of support we received."

Boosting cloud adoption

Helping its clients to move business applications into the cloud, Alegri sup-

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ports them throughout the planning and implementation processes. Thanks to its experience of running SAP S/4HANA and SAP HANA on the Microsoft Azure cloud platform with SLES for SAP Applications, the company can apply and recommend best practices to ensure a quick, smooth and frictionless production deployment for its clients.

Mielke explains: "Especially for clients who have not yet migrated to SAP HANA, the idea of moving their most critical business applications over to the new database platform can be a daunting one. Getting the SAP HANA sizing right can be tricky and is something that needs careful consideration if you are setting up a new physical infrastructure in your data center. With a virtual infrastructure hosted in the Microsoft Azure cloud and certified by SAP, however, clients can scale compute and storage resources up and down as

required. This means that our clients can spin up test environments to check sizing requirements without having to invest lots of time or money in getting the hardware footprint right before they can even start the migration project.

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Results

Speeding up business modernization

With its enterprise-class cloud solution for SAP S/4HANA using SLES for SAP Applications as the operating system, Alegri is making it easier than ever for organizations to use the next-generation ERP system and reap the rewards of the innovative SAP HANA in-memory database technology.

Mielke states: "At Alegri, we now offer a cloud solution for SAP S/4HANA complete with a SAP HANA database without any on-premises hardware, eliminating the need to invest in costly certified, high-performance infrastructure or assign staff to manage and maintain complex on-premises systems. With optimized images of SLES for SAP Applications available directly on Microsoft Azure, we can spin up a virtual SAP S/4HANA environment in as little as 30 minutes instead of several weeks, so we can start working with clients to solve their business challenges right away without long lead times and delays. Our approach also simplifies sizing of the systems, as clients can flexibly scale resources up or down as and when needed to maintain the best performance for their business users and customers at all times.

"As an IT consultancy, we want to reduce complexity and enable our clients to react rapidly to changing business situations and fluctuating market conditions. Addressing new demands from staff and customers regularly requires bringing in new applications to offer an optimized, more sophisticated user experience.

By running SLES for SAP Applications on Microsoft Azure, we can help clients to stay ahead of their competitors, even at times of rapid change and increasing digitization of business processes across all departments."

Cutting operating costs

In addition to boosting business agility, opting for the Alegri solution for SAP S/4HANA on Microsoft Azure instead of an on-premises deployment can also deliver significant operational cost savings.

"One benefit of cloud computing is how quick and easy it is to launch virtual servers — what many people often forget is, how fast and simple it is to decommission systems again that are no longer being used," says Mielke. "For example, when you complete a development project or if you need to put a project on hold, it makes sense to decommission the relevant virtual servers."

Alegri has built a framework on SLES for SAP Applications and Microsoft Azure APIs to automate the management of virtual

servers. This framework provides a user-friendly portal, where clients can specify when their virtual servers should be running, and the tool will then start and stop them accordingly without requiring any manual intervention by system administrators.

Mielke elaborates: "With the freedom and flexibility to decommission virtual servers running non-critical workloads, such as test and development systems, we can generate substantial savings. To reduce our own operating costs, we have built a framework that can, for example, stop servers at the end of the working day and automatically re-start them the next morning. As part of this scheduling, servers can also remain stopped over the weekend, when our consultants do not need their development environments. This means that, instead of running 168 hours a week, many virtual servers only actually need to run for 50 hours a week. This automation reduces our operating costs for test and development systems by approximately 60% — a big saving without increasing the management or administration workload at all. When we are talking to clients about the benefits of a cloud deployment, we also highlight our framework which we offer as part of our

consulting services."

Running SAP software on Microsoft Azure offers additional advantages in other areas, for instance concerning batch processing and data backup. Thanks to SAP HANA in-memory processing technology, batch and backup jobs can run much faster, so they no longer take the whole night. And the servers running these jobs can then sometimes also be stopped when not in use, further lowering operating costs.

Supporting innovation

About two thirds of Alegri's clients and potential clients are considering moving mission-critical systems into the cloud, which represents a huge business opportunity for the company. Being able to offer a flexible approach — in which companies can start small to experiment with new technologies, workflows and user interfaces, and then scale up when they move into production — is essential for Alegri in order to support customers on their digital transformation journeys and win new business.

Mielke concludes: "SLES is a key element of our Microsoft Azure cloud solution for

SAP S/4HANA. The optimized operating system is certified, well-tested and fully supported, providing the reliability we need to run clients' SAP landscapes. As more and more organizations aim to deliver highly innovative applications and services to meet new customer demands, we are confident that we can help them become more agile with the cost-efficient, scalable option of SAP S/4HANA in the cloud."

Benefits

- Provides a tested, reliable and easy-to-manage platform to operate mission-critical SAP applications.
- Optimized for Microsoft Azure cloud, enabling clients to adopt SAP HANA technology in as little as 30 minutes — instead of several weeks.
- Integrated automation allows clients to start and stop virtual servers rapidly as required, reducing operating costs by 60%.

Find out how SUSE can help you become an innovation hero!

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