

ACH Group Deploys “Set-and-Forget” IT Infrastructure

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ACH Group is a not-for-profit aged care organization that supports good lives for older people in South Australia. Founded in 1952, the organization has residential facilities across Adelaide, the Fleurieu Peninsula, and East Melbourne. ACH also offers a range of health, support, and home care services as well as social activities. For more information, visit achgroup.org.au.

Executive Summary	
Customer Name: ACH Group	
Industry: Aged care and health services	
Location: Mile End, South Australia	
Number of Employees: 1500+	
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Improve infrastructure reliability and resiliency • Simplify data center operations • Shift from hardware maintenance to service modernization and business improvement
Solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cisco® HyperFlex™ Hyperconverged Infrastructure (HCI) • Cisco Intersight™ Services • Cisco Secure Firewall <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Cisco Firepower 2100 Series • Cisco AnyConnect® Secure Mobility Client
Results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Freed up 25 percent of IT infrastructure support time via automated monitoring • Saving \$20,000 per month by decommissioning disaster recovery facility • Consolidated computing footprint by 40 percent while driving VM density • Accelerated backup and offsite copies from 12 hours to 2 hours



Improving IT reliability

With more than 1500 users and over a dozen office locations and residential care homes to support, the lean IT operations team at aged care provider ACH Group has a heavy load. The IT needs of the residential

care homes are particularly challenging, with a host of critical care systems that track resident vitals, allergies, and risks. If those systems go down, ACH Group’s ability to deliver exceptional service and care is severely hindered.

At one point, ACH Group lost an internet link at its head office, disconnecting its remote sites from core applications and forcing staff to revert to paper notes. Combined with an aging infrastructure, the event triggered a full data center refresh.

“Resilience and reliability were the top priorities,” says Marc Koenecke, head of digital operations at ACH Group. “But we also wanted a simplified infrastructure that would be easy to manage and scale.”

ACH Group chose the powerful combination of Cisco HyperFlex and Cisco Intersight. Deployed in two colocation facilities, the hyperconverged infrastructure provides full redundancy, automatic failover, and simplified, cloud-based management.

Driving down cost

The performance of Cisco HyperFlex enabled ACH Group to consolidate its computing footprint and drive greater VM density. The organization’s SQL Server licensing costs have been reduced as a result, and Marc says consumption expenses have been much lower than anticipated thanks to data deduplication.

“Through storage optimization, we’ve reduced our total capacity from 74 percent to 50 percent,” he says. “And because the two sites are active/active, we’ve been able to decommission our disaster recovery facility, which is saving us about \$20,000 per month.”

In addition to cost reductions, ACH Group’s applications and internal operations are now much faster. Payroll reporting that used to take five minutes now takes 10 seconds. And backups that previously lasted 12 hours are now completed in less than two hours with Cisco HyperFlex All Flash Nodes and cloud-based backup and recovery from Veeam.

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Simplicity and scalability

The hyperconverged infrastructure, which can be easily scaled, has greatly simplified ACH Group's IT operations.

"I've never seen a platform like this. It's mostly hands-off," Marc says. "In the past, we had to configure and manage 200-plus servers individually. Now, with Intersight, we manage everything as a single cluster through a single pane of glass. No more manual configurations, and no juggling between the two sites."

Infrastructure upgrades that used to take more than a day are now completed in less than six hours, and a separate sandbox environment for staging and testing helps ensure there are no hiccups.

"Intersight has been a huge help. It provides proactive alerts that enable us to be more passive with monitoring," Marc says, estimating 25 percent of his infrastructure team's time has been freed up as a result. "And if anything drops, the system is able to heal itself until a permanent fix is implemented."

Cisco Intersight identified a faulty RAM module within ACH Group's environment a while back, he notes. Without intervention, it evacuated VMs onto another available host, placed the affected host into maintenance mode, and prompted ACH Group to log a ticket. An engineer then showed up with a new RAM module.

"That's the only issue we've experienced in the three years the system has been running," Marc says. "It was resolved in a couple of days, required minimal effort from our staff, and there was no impact on availability or performance."

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Agility and responsiveness

Few ACH Group employees were working from home when the COVID-19 pandemic hit, and the company had previously struggled with virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI). But with Cisco HyperFlex and Cisco Firepower in place, ACH Group readied 700 devices for remote work in less than three weeks.

"The platform was a godsend," Marc says. "We didn't have a VPN endpoint installed when the pandemic materialized, but we were able to configure and deploy Cisco AnyConnect®, align it with HyperFlex and Firepower, and expand the number of users within weeks. It's really a testament to the platform and its integrations that we were able to do all of that so easily and quickly."

With a "set-and-forget" infrastructure in place, ACH Group's IT operations team has shifted its focus from hardware maintenance to customer-focused service modernization. The team is replacing analog Nurse Call buttons with a digital, mobile solution and plans to automate the reporting of routine bed checks and fitness tests.

"The reliability and simplicity of HyperFlex enabled us to readily respond to the pandemic while continuing to drive service improvements," Marc says. "And it has allowed us to refocus our operations resources from hardware management to business and customer support."

Product list

[Cisco HyperFlex](#)

[Cisco Intersight](#)

[Cisco Secure Firewall](#)

[Cisco AnyConnect](#)

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