



## Flooring firm lays down a solid base for its future

Swift-Train, a top flooring wholesaler, modernized its data center for more simplified, visible and reliable operations, using Dell EMC Solutions for Microsoft Azure Stack HCI and OpenManage Integrations



Wholesale Trade

United States

### Business needs

With its data center servers nearly a decade old, Swift-Train Company's IT operations team were stretched keeping them patched and working as long as possible, but server maintenance was increasing while support and parts were getting scarce. The time had come to invest in new infrastructure for today's operations and tomorrow's growth.

### Solutions at a glance

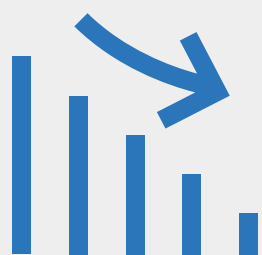
- [Dell EMC Solutions for Microsoft Azure Stack HCI](#)
- [Dell EMC S2D R640 Ready Node](#)
- [Dell EMC PowerEdge R640 Rack Server](#)
- [Dell EMC OpenManage Integration with Microsoft Windows Admin Center](#)
- [Dell EMC PowerSwitch S5200-ON Series 25GbE switches](#)

### Business results

- Increases operational visibility
- Boosts reliability and scalability
- Simplifies IT operations
- Improves application performance

Cuts rack space by

50%



Reduces energy use by

70%



Many people in management jobs start their workdays checking email to see what urgent issues they may have to address before they can get on with their to-do lists. But not Greg Altman, IT infrastructure manager for Swift-Train Company, a major distributor of commercial and residential flooring products.

Altman recently deployed Dell EMC Microsoft Azure Stack HCI solution, featuring Dell EMC R640 Storage Spaces Direct Ready Nodes running Windows Server 2019. For streamlined management with Microsoft Windows Admin Center and Systems Center Virtual Machine Manager, use OpenManage Integration with Windows Admin Center and OpenManage Integration for Microsoft System Center Virtual Machine Manager. The integrations bring visibility to the Azure Stack HCI Cluster environments. Moreover, the OpenManage Enterprise Console provides centralized Infrastructure lifecycle management of the entire compute in the data center.

So before Altman checks his email at his office in the company's Houston headquarters, he takes a quick look at his Windows Admin Center with OpenManage Integration dashboard. If he wants, he can do the same from home or on the go via his smartphone.

## Morning routine, all indicators green

"It's part of my morning routine," Altman says. "And it never ceases to amaze me to have a single pane to manage our pair of two-node, back-to-back Azure Stack HCI clusters, one in Houston and one 200 miles away in San Antonio for failover.

"Since deployment, all indicators have been in the green, so I know my day's not going to be complicated by our infrastructure. But if there were an alert, odds are good that I'd be able to deal with it before it impacts our employees or customers."

Managing the company's IT infrastructure wasn't always so easy for Altman and his partner, who together manage, in Altman's words, "anything with an IP address, not just PCs, servers, firewalls and wireless access points but also phones, printers, copiers and all other devices."

Servers, in particular, were a challenge, hosting as many as 30 virtual machines (VMs) using the Microsoft Hyper-V hypervisor in their stack.



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Greg Altman,  
IT Infrastructure Manager,  
Swift-Train Company

## An aging but indispensable infrastructure

The VMs provided indispensable platforms for Active Directory administration; file-sharing repositories; and marketing's enormous library of images and videos. They also hosted the finance group's apps and records; the phone system, used by about 100 office employees and a 12-person call center; and internal websites providing freight quotes and other services. External, market-facing websites for customers also used VMs.

The main problem with the servers was their age. "Most were at least five years old, and many were older, running Windows Server 2012 and 2016, with one still running Windows Server 2008," Altman says. "We were spending as much as five hours a week patching and maintaining them. Some didn't have enough memory, so we had to stagger the startup of their VMs. Simply put, we lacked complete visibility into their health and operational status."

Clearly, the time had come for the company to invest in a new data center infrastructure. Having used primarily Microsoft products on Dell EMC servers for years, Altman wanted to stick with what was familiar.

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## Betting the company's future

"After all, our decision was essentially betting on the company's future," says Altman. "But we weren't looking to just upgrade; we also wanted to take advantage of all the technology advancements that Dell EMC and Microsoft have driven in recent years, like hyperconverged infrastructure."

The timing of Altman's initiative couldn't have been better. Dell EMC had just announced its Solutions for Microsoft Azure Stack HCI offering, with 18 configuration options. For his needs, Altman chose two clusters of Dell EMC S2D Ready Nodes with 192GB of RAM each, plus multiple terabytes of hybrid SSD and HDD storage. Connecting the nodes are Dell EMC PowerSwitch S5200-ON Series 25GbE switches.

Dell EMC Solutions for Microsoft Azure Stack HCI are built on the software-defined compute, storage and networking features of Windows Server 2019 and are fully integrated, validated and supported. The solution is compatible with Hyper-V virtual machines, so deployment was quick and easy. Although Altman keeps mission-critical resources on-premises in the S2D Ready Nodes, he seamlessly manages non-critical ones in the Microsoft Azure cloud.

## Fast, easy migration

“In total, it took about 12 hours for each site from unboxing the R640 rack servers to migrating the VMs and their apps and our websites,” Altman says. “The Dell EMC documentation was great, very straightforward, and the migration was transparent. One of our web developers was running a video when we moved her website over, and the video never paused.”

An immediate company benefit has been a 50 percent space savings and associated energy savings, according to Altman. “We eliminated two racks of space thanks to the Azure Stack HCI solution,” he says. “And that saved about 70 percent of our previous energy costs. And if we need to add capacity for future growth, it’ll be easy to do so.”

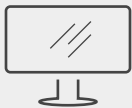
So far, the company’s Dell EMC S2D R640 Ready nodes haven’t had any unscheduled downtime. “We used to spend 4–5 hours a week doing server maintenance, including a 2 hour maintenance window on Saturdays,” Altman says. “But now my Saturday maintenance takes just 30 minutes, given all the automation and visibility that I can utilize from the OpenManage integration with Windows Admin Center, so I have more time with my family.”

Altman reports that the extra reliability ensures the availability of the company’s resources to both employees and customers, while also improving application performance. Even more, with the simplified operations of the Azure Stack HCI running on Dell EMC S2D Ready Nodes, and with OpenManage integration, he can focus on more strategic projects.

“For example,” says Altman, “I’m looking at putting our phone system in the cloud, which would save us about \$20,000 a year and enable our people more flexibility in where, when and how they work. I’m also looking at containerizing our websites. These are things I just didn’t have time for before deploying our Azure Stack HCI solution from Dell EMC.”

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