

# COLUMBIA SPORTSWEAR PUTS TRUST IN VBLOCK™ INFRASTRUCTURE PLATFORMS FOR GLOBAL SAP ROLLOUT

Brand-name apparel manufacturer seeks greater flexibility and efficiency to support evolving business-critical enterprise applications.

## Executive Summary

Columbia Sportswear  
Sports Apparel and Outdoor Manufacturer  
Portland, Oregon

## Challenges

- Difficulty resolving IT problems when multiple vendors were involved
- Needed to scale flexibly to meet unpredictable business requirements

## Solution

- Vblock™ Infrastructure Platforms
  - Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS)
  - Cisco MDS networking
  - EMC VMAX storage
  - EMC Ionix Unified Infrastructure Manager (UIM)
  - VMware vSphere virtualization

## Results

- Reduced IT management overhead
- Improved efficiencies and accountability with single line to support
- Agility to meet evolving needs of SAP environment
- Foundation for private cloud to deliver IT as a service

## Challenge

Columbia Sportswear is a global leader in the manufacture and wholesaling of sports apparel and outdoor clothing. Based in Portland, Ore., the company serves a global market with 3,200 employees and offices in 45 countries worldwide.

The company recently selected SAP to run its most critical business applications, including financial, product development, manufacturing, and shipping. Given the importance that SAP would play, Columbia also took the opportunity to evaluate its underlying infrastructure.



Michael Leeper, Columbia Sportswear's senior manager, IT engineering, explains, "Our new SAP solution will be the heart of our company. So, we needed to make sure that the infrastructure supporting SAP was rock solid and the very best of what's available in the market today."

One of the IT challenges Columbia faces today is resolving problems when multiple vendors are involved. Often the source of an issue is unclear in a complex environment that spans servers, storage, and networks.

Dan Hein, Columbia Sportswear's director, global shared services, says, "It could take a long time to coordinate with all our vendors when a problem arose. We needed a way to mitigate some of that static to resolve these issues more quickly."

Leeper adds, "Another challenge was finding a platform that can scale flexibly and efficiently to meet our business requirements. Like all growing companies, we struggle at times with forecasting what our future needs will be, especially in IT. We needed an infrastructure that could respond, often quickly, to new-business requests."

## Solution

To support its business-critical SAP environment, Columbia Sportswear chose Vblock Infrastructure Platforms which combine industry-leading compute, network, storage, virtualization, and management technologies in prepackaged units of converged infrastructure. Columbia Sportswear's two Vblock Series 700 platforms are comprised of Cisco Unified Computing System (UCS) servers, Cisco MDS networking, EMC VMAX storage, as well as VMware vSphere virtualization and EMC Ionix Unified Infrastructure Manager (UIM) solutions.

One of the Vblock Series 700 platforms is configured with Flash drives for maximum I/O performance to support Columbia's production SAP environment. The second VCE Vblock Series 700 platform, configured primarily with Fibre Channel storage, would be used for failover, as well as for the company's development and quality assurance (QA) environments.

"We have a fairly mature infrastructure," notes Leeper. "So when we considered which platforms we'd choose to host SAP, we wanted to evaluate only the best in the industry. After a thorough evaluation of potential solution providers, we found that the VCE converged infrastructure offered the most robust solution available."

## Results

### Simplifying IT

Because Columbia already was familiar with Cisco, EMC, and VMware technologies, they are able to build on existing knowledge and experience while gaining the advantages of an integrated platform and a single line of support.

"The integration of compute, network, and storage into a single stack is transforming the way we, as IT professionals, view these environments," states Hein. "We anticipate a significant reduction in the overhead required to manage the Vblock platform environment, because we've taken three separate disciplines and combined them into one."

Leeper adds, "Using the UIM solution as a single pane of glass to manage all the compute, networking, and storage layers should not only save us a lot of administrative time, but help optimize our systems and enable us to respond to the business in a much more holistic way."

"With VCE, there's just one support number to call, which is also important to us," remarks Hein, "especially since the people on the other end of the line understand the entire technology stack. We're already realizing efficiencies from having a single place to go with our questions."



### Scaling at the Pace of Business

As the SAP deployment begins, the company anticipates that the Vblock platform will deliver the robust performance needed for its critical business applications. However, the exact technical requirements are difficult to predict, making the Vblock system an especially good match.

Dan Hein explains: “Because Vblock is preconfigured and pretested by VCE, we can move forward with our SAP deployment quickly and with confidence that the infrastructure will deliver the robust performance and availability we need out of the gate. As the deployment unfolds and our business users begin to request new services, the platform's built-in agility also will allow us to easily scale to meet the evolving needs of our SAP environment, and the needs of the business.”

### Next Steps

Columbia's vision for the Vblock platform is to create a private cloud where developers and users alike no longer need to concern themselves with the underlying details of the infrastructure. Instead, all they need to do is define a set of business requirements and the system will respond with the right IT services.

“Vblock is enabling us to move away from individual pieces of gear such as CPUs, switches and RAID arrays, and into an era where we just have an environment for delivering all types of IT capabilities and business applications as services,” says Hein. “It will allow us to be much more proactive and efficient in responding to the growing needs of the business.”

Michael Leeper concurs: “Columbia has its goals set on growing significantly in the next five years, and we believe that Vblock Infrastructure Platforms will allow us to meet any requirement the business gives us—quickly and efficiently.”

### For More Information

For more information about the VCE solution, please go to [www.vce.com](http://www.vce.com).

For more information about Columbia Sportswear, please go to [www.columbia.com](http://www.columbia.com).

### ABOUT VCE

VCE, the Virtual Computing Environment Company formed by Cisco and EMC with investments from VMware and Intel, accelerates the adoption of converged infrastructure and cloud-based computing models that dramatically reduce the cost of IT while improving time to market for our customers. VCE, through the Vblock platform, delivers the industry's first completely integrated IT offering with end-to-end vendor accountability. VCE's prepackaged solutions are available through an extensive partner network, and cover horizontal applications, vertical industry offerings, and application development environments, allowing customers to focus on business innovation instead of integrating, validating and managing IT infrastructure.

For more information, go to [www.vce.com](http://www.vce.com).