

Virtualization Consulting Service Providers: Profiles

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This document provides a quick reference to understand the offerings and capabilities of nine service players in virtualization consulting services. The providers in this document represent those that generate Gartner client interest, as evidenced by analysts' interactions with clients, as well as those that were able to provide client references on their virtualization services. The list of providers featured is not comprehensive or exhaustive. Many service providers not profiled here also provide virtualization services. Although many providers offer server, storage, network and desktop virtualization, the focus of this document is server virtualization because this is the area of most interest and current activity.

Key Findings

- Although most large external service providers (ESPs) have virtualization consulting offerings, their experience, focus and target market differ.
- Accenture and Deloitte tend to engage in virtualization consulting, mostly as part of a larger data center modernization project. They also tend to partner for the technical “rack and stack” pieces of the engagement.
- IBM, HP and Dell are able to bundle products and services into a highly attractive offering, and they are good candidates for clients with a bias toward their products or who are agnostic about products but want the best bundled deal. However, the consulting arms of these companies are not married to their products and will perform services on any brand of the client's choosing.
- Fujitsu, HCL Technologies, Wipro Technologies and Infosys Technologies are good candidates for clients considering engaging an external provider to manage the environment after virtualization.

Recommendations

- Use this document to understand the offerings and capabilities of the nine profiled ESPs in virtualization consulting. This research can help you make informed decisions on your “long list” of providers for a virtualization program.

- When selecting virtualization consulting services, decide on the level of importance of the competencies, scale, range of offerings and skills you require and match them to the provider's capabilities.
- All nine ESPs profiled in this document have satisfied clients willing to act as references; however, clients are advised to perform their own diligence because resource availability — even in the largest firms — varies by geography and may be stretched in periods of high demand.
- Ask for a free virtualization workshop or assessment. Many ESPs offer these for qualified clients. You can test-drive these ESPs without putting money at risk.

ANALYSIS

This document supplements “Market Overview: Virtualization Consulting Service Providers,” which outlines the market for virtualization consulting and categorizes providers of virtualization services. This research provides a quick reference to understand the offerings and capabilities of nine service players in virtualization consulting services. Each of the providers profiled here briefed Gartner on their virtualization service capabilities and provided customer references. References were interviewed by phone or responded to a set of questions via e-mail. The providers profiled here are not exhaustive. They merely represent those that generate Gartner client interest, as evidenced by analysts' interactions with clients, as well as those who were able to provide positive client references on their virtualization services. This document does not represent a vendor rating, ranking or evaluation.

1.0 Accenture

Accenture offers the complete life cycle of virtualization services, including full-scale implementation, as well as part of a larger IT transformation project, such as an infrastructure transformation initiative, which includes moving into a cloud-computing architecture. It can, however, also perform virtualization services as part of a domain service, such as data center optimization or “green IT” initiative or, less frequently, a technology-specific service, such as virtualizing servers or storage. It sees virtualization as a building block for achieving high performance and, hence, the need for virtualization implementation to be designed and deployed in tandem with Information Technology Infrastructure Library (ITIL)-based service delivery and support processes. Accenture sees virtualization as an integral piece of its vision of a shared infrastructure with automated orchestration and provisioning, predictive operations, and metering and billing. Virtualization projects are delivered using its workbench: a structured approach that is repeatable and leverages onshore and offshore resources. Its virtualization workbench contains a repository of methodology, project planning and technical design and implementation materials from prior projects and vendor-specific processes and utilities.

Worldwide, Accenture has some 2,000 core practitioners in virtualization, supported by an additional 1,000 consultants. Avanade, which is majority-owned by Accenture, has a particularly strong Microsoft orientation and has seen steep increases in the request for Hyper-V implementation, in addition to its longer-tenured VMware practice. The Accenture & Cisco Business Group brings to clients complementary skills from Accenture and Cisco to enable clients to leverage Cisco's unified computing technology and move toward a next-generation data center that includes a service-oriented infrastructure and x86 server virtualization.

Accenture is best-suited for program management, and for providing upfront design and blue prints. Its strong focus on business case, business requirements and thorough communication makes it a good candidate for projects that require coordinating multiple IT disciplines and keeping stakeholders committed and working together to achieve the stated business objectives. It often teams up with local boutiques and clients' preferred infrastructure service providers to deliver a total solution.

Client feedback indicates track record at executing data center virtualization almost flawlessly, a trusted relationship with team members and partner in charge, technical expertise in the domain area, clear escalation path and a high level of satisfaction from business partners as key benefits of using Accenture for virtualization projects.

2.0 Dell Global Services

Dell Global Services (see Note 1) offers virtualization consulting within its ProConsult Data Center Services. As is typical of Dell Global Services, its platform optimization and virtualization services are productized in a modular fashion that together provide an end-to-end complete service, with clear phases and decision points to help clients make critical financial and technology decisions at each stage. The modular approach is also flexible; clients can pick and choose only the phases they need help with. Each phase is done in a fixed-price basis. A free workshop is offered to qualified clients to help them understand the potential of virtualization. In addition, Dell Global Services offers virtual server management through low-cost remote monitoring and reporting under its Dell ProManage umbrella.

Dell Global Services' approach considers the technical, performance and business aspects of each workload and their interdependencies to help ensure an environment that is manageable and that satisfies the application owners in terms of savings and service levels. To this end, its approach involves cross-functional teams, communicating and evangelizing to appropriate leaders, and rearchitecting operational processes that may need to change to address a virtualized environment. Currently, 50% of its virtualization delivery team is in the Americas, 30% in Europe, the Middle East and Africa (EMEA), and 20% in Asia/Pacific and Japan.

Note 1

Dell

This research was done prior to the acquisition of Perot Systems and does not include Perot's capabilities in the evaluation.

Dell Global Services is particularly suited to clients who are contemplating migrating from proprietary reduced instruction set computer (RISC)/Unix systems to standard x86 platforms. Although Dell Global Services claims it does not push clients toward Dell hardware, it is very much biased toward getting clients into an x86, Windows/Linux and virtual infrastructure environment — an environment it believes affords clients the best value. Dell Global Services' "sweet spots" are midsize to large companies, from environments with dozens of servers to several thousands.

Dell Global Services' capabilities in virtualization are deeper and better than generally known. The perception of Dell as a low-cost and not necessarily high-quality hardware provider has negatively affected the perception of its service capabilities. Clients that have evaluated and used Dell Global Services for virtualization have been pleasantly surprised by its depth and quality of technical competencies, its willingness to invest in the relationships and its attitude of doing whatever is needed to ensure project success. In addition, client feedback indicated that Dell Global Services pays attention to and helps address the impact of virtualization on the organization and processes, a trait that is rare in vendors that grow up in the technical space.

3.0 Deloitte

Deloitte's virtualization services typically fall under a broader data center and infrastructure engagement that may include IT cost reduction, data center consolidation, IT services management optimization, and other advisory and implementation services. Within these larger engagements, Deloitte would typically identify opportunities for virtualization as a means to facilitate these larger programs rather than on a stand-alone basis.

Deloitte brings a comprehensive set of capabilities to a data center opportunity, comprising technology, human capital, enterprise risk services, tax services, and real estate capabilities. Along with the technology expertise, these additional capabilities allow the company to add value to a data center/virtualization project by assessing/informing clients on the security, privacy, business continuity and compliance risks, and providing location advice based on a holistic mix of factors, including tax and real estate assessments.

While Deloitte provides end-to-end virtualization services, its strengths are in strategy, planning, business value of project, program management and IT process optimization and implementation related to managing a virtual environment. It typically partners for basic virtualization implementation services.

Deloitte's bench includes 150 virtualization professionals and more than 600 other infrastructure specialists on a worldwide basis.

Deloitte is a good fit for large organizations with complex IT environments, especially those that need help implementing virtualization that supports mission-critical production systems. Deloitte is also a good fit for organizations that need one advisor who can bring together the full strength of capabilities surrounding a data center transformation, including process optimization, organization change management, chargeback and funding models, and location selection. Client feedback indicates that Deloitte has strong project management capabilities, excellent technical staff, is knowledgeable in current technologies and process improvement, and is able to assemble a mix of Deloitte and client staff to create a strong team.

4.0 Fujitsu

With background in the design, implementation and operation of large, complex and highly available infrastructures, including its own mainframe systems and multidomain facility (MDF) product in 1984 (which allowed customers to run more than one operating system), and continuing through its Solaris line of servers, which allowed a similar capability, Fujitsu offers server and desktop virtualization services as part of its portfolio of services for Dynamic Infrastructures, which also include network and storage optimization. Its bench includes 120 virtualization professionals and more than 2,000 other infrastructure, service and application specialists worldwide. In addition to project-based services, Fujitsu also offers managed services and cloud-based services. Two virtualization-related managed services are virtualization managed service and workplace as a service (virtual desktop services), and two cloud-based services are infrastructure-as-a-service offerings for servers and storage.

In project-based services, Fujitsu offers a three-day proof of concept workshop, an assessment offering (which includes virtualization, consolidation assessment, a business case and high-level design), a plan-design-implement service and a one-week health check service, as well as virtualization services in terms of disaster recovery, desktop and backup services.

Virtualization is a core focus area within Fujitsu's global data center (Dynamic Infrastructures) practice. While its offerings and capabilities are built around VMware, Fujitsu also offers services around Microsoft, Solaris and Linux virtualization, as well as desktop virtualization solutions.

Fujitsu focuses on two distinct markets: managed services in developed countries (Europe, the United States, Japan and Australasia) and product-related projects in Asia and other developing markets. In the developed world, Fujitsu targets midsize and large enterprises. In Asia and other developing markets, Fujitsu targets the upper end of small and midsize businesses with products and associated services. Fujitsu's virtualization practice is more mature in Europe and Australasia and less so in the United States and some Asian countries.

Fujitsu is best-suited to IT organizations that additionally wish to address storage and network optimization as part of the transformational initiative and especially those with the intention of having Fujitsu take over the management of the environment after the transition to a virtualized environment. Client feedback indicates that Fujitsu is proactive in seeking continuous improvement — including virtualization — for managed service clients, and that its virtualization capabilities are solid.

5.0 HCL Technologies

From its legacy of building and operating a high-availability, high-response time infrastructure, HCL Technologies has developed into one of the premier full-service infrastructure service providers. Its virtualization credentials include engagements with more than 25 Fortune 500 and Global 1000 customers, a global system integration partnership with VMware and partnerships with Microsoft, Cisco, EMC, Hitachi Data Systems and Sun Microsystems, and a team of more than 150 virtualization professionals supported by 300 other infrastructure implementation specialists on a worldwide basis.

While HCL Technologies offers traditional consulting services to virtualize servers, storage, networks and desktops, it started offering in January 2009 a unified virtualization as a service (UVaaS) offering, providing network, storage, server and desktop virtualization. In this offering, HCL Technologies takes over a client's hardware assets, virtualizes them and "rents" them back to the client on a per-month, per-virtual instance basis. For clients, this means no capital expenditure (capex) investments and no upfront investments on licenses. It also offers "Business Ready with Virtual Infrastructure Utility" for specific applications, such as SAP. To date, it has implemented more than 100 licenses. Clients can pick among three productized service packs: basic, gold and platinum, depending on the level of services needed. Pricing is dependent on the number of servers virtualized. As an example, a basic service pack starts at \$35 per virtual machine per month.

HCL Technologies' virtualization offerings are particularly suited to large companies looking for an experienced partner, existing outsourcing clients and clients who may wish to outsource their environment after virtualization. Client feedback indicates that HCL Technologies is particularly flexible as a partner, has the experience and capability to help clients avoid pitfalls in their virtualization journey and is willing to invest in clients by performing upfront work, such as planning and justification on "their own nickel."

6.0 HP Services

HP Services has probably one of the most comprehensive suites of virtualization services, in terms of covering the entire services life cycle of strategy, design, implementation, support, education, and IT services management; targeting the complete range of small, midsize and large enterprises; and spanning data centers and desktops. Health checks are also available for clients seeking to improve their existing virtual environments.

HP Services offers predefined, productized fixed-price and custom consulting services for planning, designing and implementing virtualization initiatives. Customers can combine multiple services and build on them to meet their specific requirements. Different packages are available based on the number of servers and complexity of the environment. Many virtualization services are also available through HP Services' Mission Critical Proactive Select program. Some of these service packages include HP Services and partner (e.g., Microsoft and VMware) products. One of HP Services' planning services features a half-day to one-day Data Center Transformation Experience Workshop that brings together key executive stakeholders for rapid opportunity analysis.

HP Virtualization Support Services provides (mission-critical) support for a wide range of HP, VMware and Microsoft virtualization software products and support for Citrix, Microsoft, VMware and HP products. HP Education Services offers a variety of virtualization courses and has trained one of the largest number of VMware-certified professionals. HP Insight Capacity Advisor Virtualization Services uses its Insight Capacity Advisor software to achieve real-time capacity planning to avoid overprovisioning and to achieve ongoing enhancement of resources. The lower and intermediate packages are also sold through channel partners.

HP Services' virtualization service offerings are particularly suited to clients with a bias toward HP hardware and software as well as clients who are agnostic about products but prefer a full virtualization solution that comprises hardware, virtualization and management software and services. Client feedback indicates that HP Services is proactive in helping clients identify where they could virtualize to meet business objectives, despite the fact that it would result in a net reduction in server purchases.

7.0 IBM Global Services

Seen as a fundamental building block of cloud computing, IBM Global Services' virtualization offering, named "Systems Consolidation & Virtualization Services," is a full set of services to help clients consolidate and virtualize data centers. Services encompass the entire environment, from mainframes to x86, to storage, desktop and application rationalization. IBM Global Services offers productized services for VMware, IBM SAN Volume Controller (SVC) and data migration in 25 countries and Microsoft virtualization products in three countries (the United States, Italy and Spain), and customized Citrix Zen services.

IBM Global Services brings to virtualization consulting clients a long history of experience with large-scale migration and consolidation, and a comprehensive set of productized and repeatable solutions, enabled by automated tools and global delivery that keeps down costs. IBM Global Services uses best-of-breed tools, such as the Management Complexity Factor (MCF) and Systems Enterprise Resource Planner (SERP) and Tivoli Productivity Center (TPC) and tools from partners such as CiRBA. (CiRBA Data Center Intelligence [DCI] is an advanced analytics engine that combines configuration, business and utilization data to help with optimal capacity planning and management answers).

IBM Global Services offers a free two-week virtualization and consolidation assessment for qualified clients, the outputs of which is a sample solution design that visually illustrates the factors that go into an IBM Global Services consolidation/virtualization engagement and how changing the business requirements affects the unique customer solution design.

IBM Global Services' sweet spot, predictably, is the largest environments, typically 100 to thousands of servers, but in some countries, they also target the 25- to 100-server environments. IBM is product-agnostic in virtualization consulting services, but it is most competitive in situations in which services and hardware are bundled and in data centers with a bias toward IBM hardware. As confirmed by client feedback, IBM Global Services' depth and breadth of technical and engineering skills, and its ability to put together solutions to solve problems in large complex environments, are "formidable."

8.0 Infosys Technologies

Infosys offers server, storage and desktop virtualization services, with an emphasis on green computing. As is true for the firm as a whole, Infosys leverages offshore resources for a large portion of its virtualization engagements, including using factory-based solutions. Infosys' approach emphasizes standardization and consolidation first before virtualization. Infosys places particular importance on developing highly scalable and repeatable solutions. It has built accelerators for each phase of the virtualization life cycle to accelerate decision making and implementation and increase consistency of its solutions. Migration is automated with in-house-built, proprietary toolsets integrated with third-party tools.

Infosys has performed more than 20 engagements on consolidation and across different industries and environments. It has a Cloud Computing Center of Excellence, a Virtualization Center of Excellence, and more than 800 trained and certified virtualization infrastructure professionals in server, storage, data center and networking technologies worldwide. It has a joint go-to-market alliance with Hitachi Storage Systems, and has a high-level partnership with Microsoft, Novell, VMware and Cisco. Its strengths in application development, rationalization and replatforming are a plus in ensuring application compatibility with the virtualized environment.

Client feedback confirms that Infosys has a strong technical foundation, excellent execution and delivery capabilities and that its tools and frameworks aid in reducing implementation cycles. Infosys virtualization offerings are particularly suited to large companies looking for solid, reasonably priced, virtualization implementation help.

9.0 Wipro Technologies

Wipro's virtualization practice is a flagship service offering in its Technology Infrastructure Services (TIS) group. With more than five years' delivery experience, Wipro has about an equal number of virtualization professionals covering x86 and Unix platforms. Leveraging a multitude of tools, both third-party and in-house proprietary, as well as the factory model, Wipro is able to achieve consistency in solution designs and implementation, allocate the appropriate onshore/offshore work and optimize the availability of different skilled resources on different pieces of the project.

Wipro provides expertise across server, storage, network and desktop virtualization, and it partners with leading virtualization product vendors in their respective spaces. It provides a life cycle of services spanning assessment, planning, product and solution evaluation and selection, design, implement, test and support. Wipro also offers specific vertical and horizontal solutions in virtualization — vertical solutions, such as building virtual solutions for specific verticals (e.g., point of sale in retail, a virtualized solution for the SAP environment, and a virtual environment for Microsoft Exchange). Wipro's Infocrossing division provides hosting services for clients who desire such services.

Wipro's corporate makeup includes 180 virtualization professionals and 2,600 other infrastructure implementation specialists worldwide.

Client feedback confirms that Wipro has deep skills in virtualization technologies and it is flexible to work with (for example, it brought in VMware experts as required for no additional costs). Wipro is best-suited to perform virtualization services for existing outsourcing clients and clients who may wish to outsource their environment after virtualization is implemented, as well as those who desire a repeatable consistent methodology for onshore/offshore delivery and/or those needing to virtualize a mixed x86/Unix environment.