



## FRANSABANK BRINGS DIGITAL BANKING SERVICES TO LEBANESE YOUTH WITH VMWARE SOLUTIONS



### CUSTOMER

FRANSABANK GROUP

### WEB SITE

WWW.FRANSABANK.COM

### INDUSTRY

FINANCIAL SERVICES

### LOCATION

BEIRUT, LEBANON

### KEY CHALLENGES

- Keep pace with the demands of Millennial customers
- Increase efficiency and agility of IT systems
- Reduce costs through virtualized systems
- Eliminate hardware 'lock-in' and dependency

### SOLUTION

Fransabank deployed VMware vSAN and vSphere as the core of its data center to give a fully software-defined network

### IMPACT AND BUSINESS BENEFITS

- Agile platform allows rapid deployment of services
- Ability to launch digital banking services
- Higher performance with less administration
- Reduced maintenance, power and cooling costs
- Efficient scaling of IT services

Fransabank has been a mainstay of Lebanon's banking sector for almost a century, having been founded in 1921. While the bank has seen more than its share change in that time, the current technological changes that are transforming the banking sector globally are perhaps the most significant the bank has ever experienced. In particular, the shifting demands of customers are the most primary drivers of change.

Fransabank, which has some 1,750 employees and 75 branches in Lebanon, as well as a presence in seven other countries including France and Algeria, realized that the state of flux in the industry could be turned to its advantage if it could successfully address the needs of its Millennial customers, who were increasingly demanding services such as online and mobile banking. However, launching these types of service using legacy SAN-based systems was not ideal and the directors at Fransabank knew that they would need to overhaul the bank's backend systems in order to transform its operations and launch the new services.

The bank had been operating using traditional IT hardware, and while this had served the company well in the past, it had started to present a number of challenges including high cost and energy consumption, and a lack of flexibility in terms of scaling up to offer new services to customers.

After an in-depth tendering process in which the directors studied a number of options, they realized that VMware offered the most suitable and wide-ranging solution addressing the many requirements of the bank. Fransabank decided to install VMware vSAN and vSphere, which allowed it to reduce its energy consumption significantly while also increasing agility, allowing for the rapid deployment of new services. The VMware solution also helped to reduce maintenance and administration costs.

### The Challenge

The needs of banking customers are changing rapidly with an increasing demand for digital banking services such as online and mobile banking: customers expect to be able to access their account anywhere and from any device. This is something that Fransabank is committed to doing but the directors also wanted to ensure that they had the back-end systems in place, allowing the bank to scale up and offer the new services securely and seamlessly across its footprint in Lebanon.

This was especially important given the rapid growth the company was seeing among Millennials. "Our millennial customer base is growing faster than any other demographic. These customers want new capabilities quickly," said Roland Tabib, Chief Information Officer, Fransabank.

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ROLAND TABIB  
CHIEF INFORMATION OFFICER  
FRANSABANK

#### VMWARE FOOTPRINT

- VMware vSphere 6.7
- VMware vSAN 6.7

#### PARTNER



CCI, member of ICC Group, offers an extensive range of IT solutions and services serving small, medium and large businesses across all industries - with offices located strategically across Lebanon, KSA, Qatar and Oman.

Through the partnership with VMware as Premier Partner they are able to bring the knowledge and expertise of IT to provide each customer with reliable and pertinent solutions that best meet their requirements.

Fransabank was running its systems using legacy SAN hardware, which required physical space on its premises, as well as round-the-clock maintenance and cooling, all of which used valuable resources. A further challenge was the need to increase agility in order to be able to deliver the new services and scale-up quickly. “Hardware is costly and comes with a legacy model. Maintaining, space, power, and cooling is often a headache,” Tabib said. “Fransabank wanted something modern – cloud with seamless updates on the fly.”

Fransabank was also running its systems from a single application and could not afford the risk of downtime – an inherent risk with its legacy systems. The bank wanted to have tools to monitor its systems and to be able to execute updates live across its systems – something that a software-defined architecture would allow.

“This forced us to look for innovative alternatives with respect to IT infrastructure that assures high agility and fast provisioning of IT services and higher performance with the least required administration, and reduced operating expenses for our IT services,” Tabib added.

#### Action

To increase its ability to scale its IT services efficiently and launch new services seamlessly, while eliminating its reliance on legacy infrastructure, Fransabank opted to deploy VMware’s vSAN and vSphere solutions. These solutions, which were deployed by CCI, a Lebanon-based IT services company and VMware Master Services Partner, provided virtualization capabilities and orchestration tools that allowed Fransabank to move away from a reliance on SAN hardware. This is helping Fransabank save time and money on maintenance and operating costs while simultaneously increasing its agility.

Fransabank’s decision to deploy the VMware solutions followed a rigorous selection process after which the team had no doubts about selecting VMware.

“I wanted to move to a hyperconverged infrastructure. What impressed me about vSAN and vSphere was their ability to allow us to move away from a physical infrastructure while gaining unparalleled flexibility to scale up with and deploy new services. I also liked the fact that the solutions would give us full visibility of the network so that we could see if there were any potential challenges on the horizon and address them quickly before they impact services,” said Khaled Dankar, Deputy Head of ICT & Projects Division, Fransabank.

#### Impact

By deploying vSAN and vSphere, Fransabank was able to consolidate the three major components of its operation – compute, storage and networking – which in turn allowed it to optimize the datacentre and grow horizontally and vertically, scaling with less power and cooling while increasing the stability of the network.

The systems have given the bank the flexibility to scale its operations and services as required without any of the headaches associated with traditional infrastructure. “The implementation has been amazing. The operating costs are far lower, and we are eliminating hardware dependency and lock-in,” Dankar said. “The major benefit of this hyperconverged infrastructure is that it allowed us to move on from traditional SAN infrastructure. vSAN covered all our requirements and played a major role in our selection.”

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KHALED DANKAR  
DEPUTY HEAD OF ICT & PROJECTS DIVISION  
FRANSABANK

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The bank saw an almost immediate 40% increase in processing performance following the main installation of vSAN and vSphere, according to Dankar.

The systems also gave Dankar and his team far greater visibility of the network, allowing them to see any issues and fix them quickly. “The system administrator can give me a dashboard where we can see most of the systems and I receive an alert about anything that appears to be not working properly,” Dankar said.

The implementation process was straightforward and allowed Fransabank to continue its regular operations throughout the process.

### Looking ahead

In the coming months, Fransabank will complete the rollout of the VMware deployment across its operations in Lebanon and its other geographies in Europe, the Middle East, and North Africa.

The firm’s IT team will also look at how they can build on the existing VMware deployment. “This is a building block,” said Dankar. “I intend to build on top of this hyperconverged infrastructure.”

Fransabank is keen to continue working with VMware to build a system that is fully interchangeable in terms of redundancy and performance. “We have laid the foundation block and from there everything is possible,” Dankar added.

