Ulink grows its distribution business with Virtuozzo Hybrid Infrastructure

Taiwanese distributor partners with Virtuozzo to accelerate growth, expands to US with hosted and on-premises Virtuozzo cloud

How does a traditional IT distributor stay relevant in a cloud-first world? Ulink, a fast-growing Taiwanese distributor, did it by partnering with Virtuozzo.

Ulink delivers public and private cloud with Virtuozzo Hybrid infrastructure

Expands to the US to provide backup, DR and business continuity services

Technical and commercial partnership helps Ulink grow

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Godfrey Hsiao
Ulink's Product Director
Ulink - 25+ years of innovation

From its launch as a systems integrator and Value-Added Reseller, 25 years ago, Ulink has grown to become a successful solutions and distribution partner for customers and resellers across Taiwan - where the company is based - as well in Myanmar, Korea, Japan, Thailand, Singapore and China.

Ulink is not just a traditional distributor, however: it specializes in virtualization and cloud-enabled solutions, and through its Comboware cloud brand, helps customers across the spectrum of industry.

Ulink works with the top ten companies in Taiwan, and thousands of customers in government, healthcare, manufacturing, education and retail. So what makes Ulink unique? Godfrey Hsiao, Ulink’s Product Director, explains:

“We offer a wide range of technologies, including many of the big names you would expect, but our job is not to sell customers the biggest names in the market: our job, working with our resellers, is to solve problems and create opportunities for our customers. We help customers plan their IT and implement the most effective solution. Sometimes that is an off-the-shelf solution; more often it’s a custom solution we design for them, but in almost all cases, it’s a solution that’s built around cloud.”

Building a better alternative cloud

Ulink partnered with Virtuozzo to bring a better alternative to on-premises private cloud, and hosted public cloud, to its diverse customer base.

“We work with very large global enterprises, and with smaller businesses that don’t have IT departments,” Godfrey says. “We provide applications - security software, CRM or ERP for example – but also the platform they run on, the hardware they run on, and typically these are hosted in our Virtuozzo cloud, or installed on the customer’s premises as a Virtuozzo private cloud. Working with Virtuozzo helps us simplify cloud IT for on-premises and hosted cloud customers.”
Virtuozzo Hybrid Infrastructure

Virtuozzo Hybrid Infrastructure is a complete solution for public, private or hybrid cloud. It combines OpenStack compute with high-performance storage, a user-friendly cloud orchestration and management portal, and a flexible and extensible integration framework. It’s designed to make cloud easy for service providers and enterprises alike.

“We originally learned about Virtuozzo through our engineering team, who saw Virtuozzo’s great work in the open-source community,” Godfrey says. “That was the start of our partnership and the first step on our journey to making Virtuozzo Hybrid Infrastructure the foundation of our Comboware cloud.”

From public cloud to private cloud appliances

Ulink runs Virtuozzo Hybrid Infrastructure (VHI) at its datacenter in Taiwan, as well as offering pre-installed, pre-configured VHI appliances, deployed on customer premises. These start at 12TB clusters, typically for smaller business customers, with 30TB and larger options available for bigger enterprises.

According to Ulink, price is an important factor for small and medium-sized enterprises, and the cost of existing cloud solutions can often discourage take-up.

“The price and licensing structure of today's enterprise cloud management platforms makes it difficult for SMEs to benefit," says Godfrey. “We aim to make cloud accessible to any business, so we have adopted a business model that suits this type of customer group.”

“Our appliances are especially attractive for customers who are looking for a more flexible and cost-effective alternative to other integrated cloud solutions;” he adds. “With Virtuozzo, we can deliver complete private clouds, with the hardware and software infrastructure fully managed and supported. Even standalone storage appliances.”

This portfolio of solutions, combined with Virtuozzo, helps Ulink bring a more compelling cloud alternative to its resellers and their customers.
“Our strategy is to help customers move to cloud, and with Virtuozzo we can give customers a fast, secure and locally supported alternative to other cloud platforms. But some customers are naturally more conservative, especially in government and financial services – that’s fine, we can provide them with a fully-managed Virtuozzo private cloud, and offer a less complex, less costly alternative to cloud platforms designed for very large enterprises,” Godfrey says.

Combeware – an end-to-end cloud-first solution

Virtuozzo-based products and services will also play a big role in Combeware, an integration platform that combines SaaS, IaaS, Blockchain, IoT and monitoring in a single portal. Combeware helps customers ensure that the many different software and hardware products they source from Ulink work correctly together, and crucially, that they maintain business continuity.

“Combeware includes AI monitoring of all of the systems a customer needs: any software or hardware problem is detected automatically, and our engineers are alerted in real time. Customers can see exactly what’s going on with their IT estate through a single portal – and we’re working with Virtuozzo to include VHI monitoring in that portal, and real-time monitoring, too,” Godfrey says.

“The aim is to ensure uninterrupted operations for the customer, and to provide proactive alerts and fixes – so that even if a customer has no IT department, they can rest assured that their cloud, their business applications, are taken care of.”

Combocloud heads West

Ulink’s next expansion plan will take Combeware to the U.S., with Virtuozzo public cloud available at a new datacenter opening in Silicon Valley. According to Godfrey, that’s partly to support Ulink’s business continuity mission, and partly to help customers in Asia-Pacific expand into the Americas.

“We’re excited about the future, and looking forward to growing with Virtuozzo!”
“Many of our customers are based here in Taiwan, but of course have branches globally. We’re expanding to the U.S. to provide local hosting options for their divisions in the Americas, and remote backup and recovery options too for applications hosted in Taiwan. This is the start of our expansion, not just to the U.S. but into Europe as well, and Virtuozzo’s cloud platform is going to be a vital part of that growth.”

“Secure multi-tenancy is very important in this regard,” he added. “So many customers have distributed departments, they need to keep IT separate for different teams and different divisions – even just within North and South Taiwan, for example. Having a true multi-tenant platform like Virtuozzo makes everything easier: you don’t need a license and a platform for each entity, each branch, each region – we can just give customers a pool of cloud resource and apply the right policies for access control.”

A hybrid partnership

What makes Virtuozzo a great partner for Ulink? According to Godfrey, it’s not just the technology partnership – it’s working together on go-to-market strategies as well as supporting the technical effort.

“What’s great about the Virtuozzo approach is that it is truly hybrid,” he said. “Virtuozzo provides the support we need from a technology point of view, but also in sales, marketing, across the board – we work together to define, build and sell the solutions our customers need. We’re excited about the future, and looking forward to growing with Virtuozzo!”