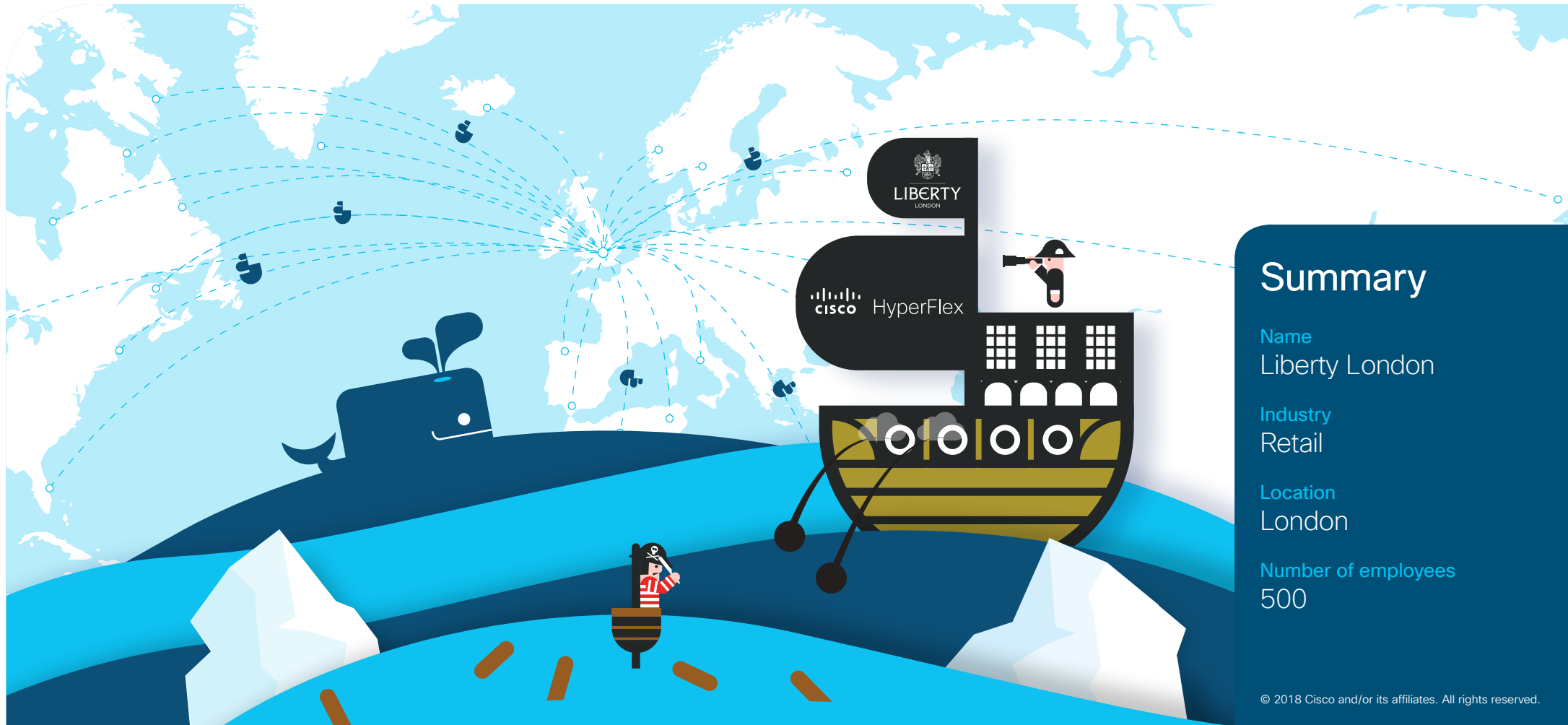


Liberty London

Hyperflex is Perfect Fit for Luxury Retailer Liberty London

Liberty London is a world-famous luxury department store and a beacon for British design. Founded in 1875 and located in London's West End, its mock-Tudor building was constructed in 1924 from the timbers of two ships: HMS Impregnable and HMS Hindustan. Today, Liberty London ranks among Retail Week's top 10 bricks-and-mortar retailers.



Summary

Name
Liberty London

Industry
Retail

Location
London

Number of employees
500

24/7 Global business

Liberty London has undergone a substantial revamp of its department store and operations. It has created a shopping journey across its multiple floors and historic surroundings, embraced digital retail, and deployed Cisco's hyperconverged infrastructure to achieve agility and flexibility in what is a fast-paced industry.

"It's not just about the store, it's about being a 24/7 business with the ability to touch every part of the Globe," states Haaron Weekes, Head of IT Service Delivery, Liberty London. "The backbone of the business is our network. We need to make sure it's bullet proof."

When Haaron first joined Liberty London, the store's systems were struggling to support its virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI), which serves some 250-350 users concurrently.

"It was taking users up to three-and-a-half minutes to log-on to their desktops and, for some, it took even longer. We had considered going back to using physical desktops. This was against the whole ethos of what we are looking to do and where IT is headed."

Refresh all areas

Haaron joined Liberty London as part of a new IT leadership team that also included the appointment of Director of IT Martin Draper. Together with the service delivery team, they are driving an IT refresh across the business.

Initially, the team looked at getting VDI to work on its existing investments, but was unable to find a sufficient solution.

"We were going to install separate 10Gb switches and a new SAN and plug that into our existing server infrastructure," says Liberty London's Senior Systems Administrator, Rick Waddington. "We then considered expanding our compute nodes out, as we had a blade chassis that was only half-populated."

Having explored several storage and networking solutions, as well as converged platforms, it was hyperconverged that emerged as the compelling alternative.

"Cisco's HyperFlex plugs straight into VMware, which makes it easy to manage, and gives us further options with disaster recovery and stretch clusters," Rick continues.

"We hadn't necessarily been thinking about hyperconverged, but the passion of the Cisco team, the fact several of our other technology partners recommended the technology and, being the type of greenfield site we were with our VDI environment made it an ideal fit."

Confidence and assurance

Liberty London operates its data centre on premises as a private cloud. Its VDI system is accessible from any location, and ties in with Microsoft Office 365 and Azure. The next step for the retailer is to expand to a second HyperFlex cluster, separate out the desktop and server clusters and move the latter to the second cluster so that legacy servers can be decommissioned.

HyperFlex will host Liberty London's main controllers, Firewalls, test and dev environment, CRM, and shipping applications, as well the system the retailer uses to store its intellectual property. Traditional applications including antivirus, HR and finance will also be migrated to HyperFlex, together with Cisco's PRIME service catalogue and ISE.

"These are all standard workloads," says Rick. "But we do have Excel users buying merchandise so they're big into crunching numbers and spreadsheets. This is where we've also seen huge improvements with HyperFlex. Most of our big projects have been Cisco on the back end and that Cisco badge gives us complete confidence in the system to be reliable and to perform."

"Cisco HyperFlex meets our needs now and in the future. We saw that we could scale up and scale out whenever we needed. When I joined Liberty London, the company wanted to have faith in IT again. We've made the right investments and we are reaping the rewards right now."

Haaron Weekes

Head of IT Service Delivery, Liberty London

The specs

Liberty London chose a Cisco HyperFlex system comprising of:

- 6-node cluster of All Flash C240 appliances
- 3x Unified Computing System (UCS) Fabric Interconnects (FIs)

It also chose Cisco for a network refresh based on the ground-breaking Catalyst 9000 LAN switch, with Meraki being considered for in-store WiFi. It has already completed deployment of a 2-node Cisco ISE (Identity Services Engine) VLAN for security policy management, as well Cisco's ASA next-generation firewalls.

Says Rick: "On the management side, we're seeing benefits in clone operations, while deploy operations are much quicker to perform, which saves on admin time. On the user side, we've seen a huge difference in terms of performance. Instead of 30 minutes, it's now 30 seconds to login on average."

