

2026-27 DCIG TOP5 VMWARE ALTERNATIVES RISING VENDORS EDITION



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VMware Alternatives // Rising Vendors Edition



StorPool with Oracle Virtualization
Arcfra Enterprise Cloud Platform
NodeWeaver
Proxmox Virtual Environment
Virtuozzo Hybrid Infrastructure

**Products are listed with the licensee's product on top, followed by the other TOP 5 award recipients in alphabetical order.*

SOLUTIONS EVALUATED

1. Arcfra Enterprise Cloud Platform
2. Citrix XenServer
3. HivelO
4. HPE Morpheus VM Essentials
5. Microsoft Hyper-V
6. NodeWeaver
7. Nutanix Cloud Platform
8. OpenNebula
9. Oracle Virtualization
10. Proxmox Virtual Environment
11. Red Hat OpenShift
12. Scale Computing Platform™
13. SoftIron HyperCloud
14. StorMagic SvHCI
15. StorPool with Oracle Virtualization
16. SUSE Linux Enterprise Server
17. Verge.io VergeOS
18. Virtuozzo Hybrid Cloud
19. Zadara zCompute

VMWARE ALTERNATIVE FEATURES EVALUATED

- Data Resilience
- Deployment
- Licensing
- Management
- Modern Infrastructure
- Support

More Viable VMware Alternatives Emerging

The shockwave since Broadcom announced its changes to VMware software licensing continues to reverberate through organizations. Organizations already had to respond to Broadcom's decision to reduce the available VMware software licenses to three in late 2023.

Now, in 2026, Broadcom again decided to reduce its VMware software licenses to two: VMware Cloud Foundation (VCF) and VMware vSphere Foundation (VVF).¹ These two licensing options will result in organizations experiencing yet another increase in their VMware subscription licensing costs, further prompting them to adopt VMware alternatives.

The following activity supports this forecast adoption of VMware alternatives as evidenced by the following:

- Organizations now actively seek out and invite providers of VMware alternatives to compete for their existing VMware business.
- New providers of VMware alternatives have entered the market.
- Existing providers of VMware alternatives have introduced many new features into their software over the past two years to better compete with VMware.
- Providers have taken steps to customize and optimize their licensing for organizations.

The new features introduced have helped close the feature gap that persists between VMware and VMware alternatives. While VMware alternatives still have not and may never entirely close this gap, they have made significant software enhancements.

Further, VMware alternatives do not need to offer all VMware features to meet the needs of organizations. Rather, VMware alternative providers need to include the specific features that organizations need at a price point that they find attractive. A growing number of VMware alternatives have achieved this threshold.

Organizations should still take care to minimally take the following steps before making a change:

- Define the VMware software features they currently use.
- Quantify how broadly they use VMware and its features in their IT environment.
- Map their use of VMware features to comparable features in a VMware alternative.
- Identify viable options to migrate VMs and data from VMware to a VMware alternative.
- Identify a viable data protection solution for the VMware alternative.
- Ensure IT staff can manage and support the VMware alternative.

The number of VMware software features that an organization uses and how broadly it uses them specifically influences any decision. Alternative solutions continue to vary in their features, software licensing, and technical support options. These options and others all factor into selecting an appropriate VMware alternative.

VCF and VVF Only Remaining VMware Licensing Options

Many organizations do not need all the software functionality available in the VCF and VVF software licenses. This prompted them to obtain subscription-based software licenses for VMware vSphere Standard or vSphere Enterprise Plus over the past two years.

Continued

VMware Alternatives // Rising Vendors Edition

Organizations may deploy VMware alternatives as software, a pre-integrated appliance, or as an IaaS.

The vSphere Standard and Enterprise Plus 8.0 licenses gave them access to the core VMware ESXi features that they specifically needed. They both support features such as *(this is not an all-inclusive list)*:

- Connectivity to external storage via Fibre Channel, iSCSI, NFS, and other storage networking protocols
- vCenter file-based backup and restore
- Virtual Volumes (vVols)
- VLAN-backed networking
- vMotion and Storage vMotion
- vSphere Lifecycle Manager

VMware vSphere Enterprise Plus then supports additional features. These include Distributed Resource Scheduler (DRS), I/O Controls, and Memory Tiering, among many others.

Organizations may access high-end features only by licensing either VCF or VVF. These features include all-flash hardware, data compression, data encryption, Quality of Service (QoS), and vSAN storage clusters, among others.²

However, beginning in January 2026 with VMware 9.0, Broadcom will only offer VCF and VVF software licenses. This change will force organizations with existing VMware vSphere Standard or Enterprise Plus 8.0 subscription licenses to choose. They must then move to VCF or VVF before 2027 ends when their existing VMware vSphere licenses expire.³ Alternatively, they can choose and move their VMs to a VMware alternative.

The State of VMware Alternative Solutions

DCIG considered nearly 30 different VMware alternatives when preparing this report, of which it formally evaluated 19. Among these 19 VMware alternatives, providers offer them for deployment in at least three ways.

Organizations may deploy them as software, a pre-integrated appliance, or as an infrastructure-as-a-service (IaaS). Furthermore, VMware alternatives that support the software and IaaS deployment options may support deployment in one or more general-purpose clouds.

Multiple Software Licensing Options

Software licensing costs remain a focal point for many organizations as they consider VMware alternatives. Unlike Broadcom, which now only offers two VMware licensing options, organizations will find over ten licensing options among VMware alternatives. Further, they will often find VMware alternatives available at more attractive price points.

VMware alternatives differ in the number and types of software licensing options they offer. However, subscription-based software licensing represents the most readily available choice, with over 80 percent supporting this option. All-inclusive software licensing represents a distant second with over 60 percent of VMware alternatives offering this option.

Beyond these two licensing options, organizations will find choices on VMware alternatives that meet different needs and use cases. For example, some VMware alternatives offer:

- **Capacity-based licensing** where an organization typically gets access to all software features and then pays based upon how much storage capacity it consumes.
- **Elastic licensing** that permits organizations to acquire, then release, additional software licenses for short periods to meet increased demand.
- **Feature or tier-based licensing** where an organization must pay to access specific software features.

VMware Alternatives // Rising Vendors Edition

This option to choose VMware vSphere as a potential hypervisor option on a VMware alternative that offers an HCI platform will likely end by 2028.

- **Per core, per VM, per physical CPU, and per physical server licensing options.** These options give organizations flexibility to better manage software licensing costs. They may utilize more powerful servers, servers with fewer CPUs or cores, or a combination thereof.
- **Perpetual software licensing.** About 25 percent of VMware alternatives still allow organizations to acquire the software and then use it indefinitely.

VMware alternatives also offer different software licensing contract lengths. Over 60 percent offer a trial version of their software while over 40 percent offer a free community edition. Organizations that decide to license software may then choose contract lengths ranging from month-to-month to five-year or even perpetual software licenses. Nearly all providers (~80%) offer a one-year software licensing term for their VMware alternative.

Using a Linux KVM-based Hypervisor Becoming a Prerequisite

Moving to a VMware alternative will likely mean that by 2028 an organization can no longer use VMware vSphere Standard or Enterprise Plus. A few VMware alternatives offer a hyper-converged infrastructure (HCI) platform option that supports VMware vSphere. This option to choose VMware vSphere as a hypervisor option will likely end by 2028. Organizations will then likely need to license VCF or VVF to continue using VMware vSphere.

This change will force any organization that selects a VMware alternative to potentially adopt that provider's hypervisor. In most cases, this will require choosing a Linux Kernel-based Virtual Machine (KVM) hypervisor. However, a few VMware alternatives also support Microsoft Hyper-V.

While many organizations likely anticipated this forced changeover in a hypervisor, they also must evaluate their VM and data migration options. Nearly every provider offers one or more options to help an organization migrate from VMware to their hypervisor.

The challenge becomes choosing from the available migration options. DCIG identified over 15 migration options that VMware alternative providers offer for VM and data migrations. These include agent-based migrations, agentless migrations, bulk migrations, cold migrations, and live migrations, among many more. VMware alternative providers with multiple migration options and professional services offer the greatest likelihood of a successful migration.

Data Resilience Capabilities Maturing

Part of selecting a VMware alternative requires an organization to evaluate each offering's data resilience features. They must minimally evaluate its backup software options, cybersecurity features, disaster recovery (DR) capabilities, and highly available (HA) configurations. They may also look at advanced capabilities such as automated load balancing, failover to and failback from the cloud, and multi-site DR, among others.

Since DCIG's initial report on VMware alternatives in 2024, VMware alternatives have significantly matured their data resilience capabilities. For example, in 2024 many VMware alternatives relied on their own cloning, snapshot, and replication features for data protection.

Now, 18 months later, organizations may still use those options for data protection. However, more third-party backup solutions support VMware alternatives and can back up their data and VMs. Further, more VMware alternatives have begun to develop and offer data protection APIs that third-party backup software can use. While still in the early stages, DCIG expects more VMware alternatives to offer data protection APIs going forward.

Cybersecurity represents the other area where VMware alternatives continue to make enhancements. More offer options to encrypt and store data in an immutable format that protects data from ransomware events. Some have even begun offering more advanced features such as anomaly or ransomware detection. Here again, DCIG expects more VMware alternatives to implement more cybersecurity functionality in the coming years.

The flexibility to repurpose server hardware will vary by VMware alternative and use case.

Flexibility to Repurpose Existing Server Hardware

Organizations often express interest in repurposing server hardware they already own and use to host VMware to re-host the VMware alternative. The flexibility to repurpose server hardware will vary by VMware alternative and use case.

Some VMware alternatives definitively support existing VMware server hardware. They provide plans, utilities, and technical support to facilitate repurposing existing server hardware to host their solution. Further, the software architecture of the VMware alternative may result in an organization experiencing a performance boost using the same hardware.

Solutions from other VMware alternatives may not offer this same flexibility. In some cases, they provide pre-packaged solutions (software and hardware) that do not permit repurposing existing server hardware. In other cases, their software may have specific hardware requirements that preclude repurposing existing server hardware.

The Rising Vendors Edition

Periodically DCIG releases a Rising Vendors edition of a TOP 5 report. In this case, DCIG created the Rising Vendors edition in conjunction with its research into VMware alternatives. This edition highlights VMware alternatives that fell into one or more of the following categorizations:

- A solution optimized and well-suited for a specific use case, such as deployment in edge or remote offices, or for delivering high levels of performance.
- A solution that has significantly improved its capabilities since the last time DCIG formally evaluated this set of products.
- A solution that differentiates itself from the other evaluated solutions, doing so in such a way that DCIG's research methodology may not fully capture the solution's nuanced differentiators.
- A new way that a solution is coming to market, such as through a collaborative, joint partnership with another provider.

In this Rising Vendors edition, organizations will find each of the TOP 5 solutions falls into one or more of each of these categories.

Common Features across All VMware Alternatives

DCIG evaluated nearly 30 different VMware alternatives, of which 19 met DCIG's inclusion criteria for the Rising Vendors Edition. Across these 19 VMware alternatives, DCIG evaluated over 425 features and options. 90 percent or more of these VMware alternatives support the following features and options:

1. **Alerting and notification.** Every evaluated VMware alternative provides alerting and notification services. Nearly every solution supports email alerts and notifications with syslog and SNMP traps being the next two most supported options.
2. **Command-line interface (CLI).** IT administrators often want or need a CLI to facilitate scripting when performing specific administrative tasks. Each of these 19 solutions supports a CLI to perform these tasks. However, the commands that each solution supports in its CLI may differ. If IT administrators plan to use the CLI, they should verify the solution's CLI includes commands they need.
3. **Directory services.** Nearly every evaluated VMware alternative supports at least one directory service. Active Directory (AD) and Lightweight Directory Access Protocol (LDAP) represent the two most supported directory services.
4. **Include their own hypervisor.** The hypervisor permits an organization to run on one or more VMs on a single computer. 95 percent of the 19 solutions offer their own hypervisor. Organizations should expect the solution to provide a Linux-based KVM hypervisor.

Over 90 percent of the providers have at least one option to migrate VMs or data from VMware to their VMware alternative.

5. **Make their solution available as a software product for on-premises deployment.** Software remains the primary way that organizations should expect to obtain and deploy a VMware alternative. Even then, they should only expect to have the option to deploy it on-premises. If an organization requires other deployment options, the organization must quantify which options it needs and validate that the solution supports them.
6. **Management interface with CLI, REST API, and web GUI options.** The management interface facilitates the management of the VMs, networking, storage, and other software features offered by the VMware alternative. Each includes a CLI, a web-based GUI, and REST APIs that organizations may use to manage the solution.
7. **Multiple options to migrate VMs and data from VMware to the VMware alternative.** Over 90 percent of the providers have at least one option to migrate VMs or data from VMware to their VMware alternative. However, across the evaluated solutions, each supports different migration options. The options commonly supported (over 60 percent) include agentless migrations, API/CLI scripted migrations, bulk migrations (multiple VMs), and cold migrations
8. **Offer multiple data protection features.** If using a VMware alternative, organizations may need to rely on, at least for now, the data protection features it offers. To meet this expectation, all VMware alternatives can perform some combination of clones, mirrors, replication or snapshots. Of available data protection options, nearly all (90%) support VM-level snapshots. These features provide organizations with a baseline level of data protection for their VMs, and the data hosted on them.
9. **Offer multiple options for high availability.** VMware alternative solutions all offer multiple HA features, with live migration or failover the only HA feature that they all support. Other HA features, that over 60 percent support, include automated load balancing, a cluster quorum mechanism, data integrity checks, multi-site DR, non-disruptive disaster recovery (DR), resource pools, and rolling upgrades.
10. **Professional services.** Properly configuring, deploying, and then managing a VMware alternative requires significant skill and knowledge. Further, many organizations may also need to migrate VMs and data from VMware to a VMware alternative. All VMware alternative providers offer support services in some form to help organizations perform these tasks. Among these services, over 90 percent of providers offer consulting services. Education and training, installation services, and migration services represent the next three most supported services.
11. **Run on x86 processors.** All evaluated VMware alternatives utilize and can run on server hardware with x86 processors.
12. **Software-defined networking (SDN).** SDN, included in all 19 solutions, minimizes the need for or takes the place of physical network switches. This feature handles, directs, and prioritizes the communication between the different nodes in the solution. Every VMware alternative supports this functionality, with 90 percent supporting the ability to define, interconnect, and manage virtual networks. Many support other SDN features such as load balancing, virtual firewalls, routing, and switching, among others.
13. **Software licensing.** Every VMware alternative provider utilizes software licensing. Subscription-based software licensing and all-inclusive licensing represent the two most supported options. The most supported lengths for licenses are (in order): one-year, three-year, and five-year options.
14. **Support Windows and Linux Guest Operating Systems (OSes).** Windows OS remains ubiquitous in organizations with organizations continuing to use Windows in their IT environments. However, organizations increasingly use Linux for performance, security, and software licensing reasons. Regardless of which guest operating systems (OSes) an organization uses, all VMware alternatives support both Linux and Windows guest OSes. However, not all VMware alternatives support all available versions of Linux and Windows.

Each DCIG TOP 5 solution offers software that can centrally manage remote deployments.

15. Technical support. Every evaluated VMware alternative provides options to contact and/or obtain technical support. Organizations may contact or obtain technical support using email or accessing a knowledgebase from nearly every provider. Phone, remote logins, and web forms represent the next three most common technical support options. Over 80 percent of VMware alternative providers minimally make same day technical support available. Most also offer a 1-hour technical support option.

16. Web-based management GUI. All products minimally provide organizations with a web-based management graphical user interface (GUI) to manage their solution. However, each solution's GUI may differ in terms of its capabilities. For instance, organizations should verify if the GUI can access, visualize, and manage all installed instances of the solution in their environment. Some may achieve this feat. Other GUIs may require organizations to enter the IP address of each instance to manage it.

Similarities Between the DCIG TOP 5 VMware Alternatives

In addition to supporting all the features listed above, all DCIG TOP 5 VMware alternatives support the additional following features. These include:

- **Software-defined storage.** In addition to SDN, all DCIG TOP 5 solutions support software-defined storage (SDS).
- **Support multiple data protection options.** While all VMware alternatives offer some of mix of their own data protection features, the DCIG TOP 5 solutions all specifically support key features. They all support asynchronous replication and space-efficient snapshots.
- **Support multiple HA options.** Like data protection, all VMware alternatives offer one or more HA options, with all supporting live migration or failovers. In addition, the DCIG TOP 5 VMware alternatives all support a cluster quorum mechanism.
- **Certified for deployment on multiple OEM server platforms.** Each TOP 5 provider has certified its software for deployment on platforms from multiple leading server hardware providers. Each one is certified for deployment on Cisco UCS, Dell PowerEdge, HPE ProLiant, Lenovo ThinkSystem, and Supermicro platforms.

Other features all DCIG TOP 5 solutions also support include:

- **Consulting and installation services**
- **Persistent storage for containers**
- **On premise software deployments**
- **SDS with unified block and file storage interface**
- **Thin provisioning**

Distinctions Between the DCIG TOP 5 VMware Alternatives

Despite the multiple similarities between the DCIG TOP 5 VMware alternatives, they also distinguish themselves in the features they support. Since their distinctions outnumber their similarities, organizations may identify specific features that a solution should possess to meet their specific requirements.

The distinctions among the DCIG TOP 5 VMware alternatives surface in their support for the following three areas: advanced Quality-of-Service (QoS) functionality, container technologies, and hybrid cloud support. While the DCIG TOP 5 VMware alternatives may

Each DCIG TOP 5 VMware alternative offers some QoS features to help measure, manage, and allocate performance on its platform.

support some of these four functions in some capacity, each one implements them differently and perhaps more robustly than the others. Consider:

- **Advanced QoS functionality.** Placing VMs and/or workloads on a specific physical host or cluster may result in performance issues. Identifying which VM or workload causes the issue, when it causes the issue, and how to best resolve the issues quickly gets complicated.

Each DCIG TOP 5 VMware alternative offers some QoS features to help measure, manage, and allocate performance on its platform. However, organizations that run critical workloads and VMs in their virtualized environments may need more sophisticated QoS features. In this area, organizations will find the DCIG TOP 5 VMware alternatives differ in their respective feature functionality.

The most supported QoS services available on the DCIG TOP 5 VMware alternatives include:

- Monitoring maximum and minimum resources allocated to a workload
- Monitoring network QoS

Organizations will find they can only manage bursts of IOPS or implement QoS for orchestration and site recovery tools on two of the DCIG TOP 5 VMware alternatives at best, at this time.

- **Container technologies.** Broadcom's decision to make VMware very costly for organizations to continue using has put them on notice. While organizations want to move away from VMware, many want to avoid moving from one proprietary hypervisor to another. This has led more to consider how a VMware alternative supports container technologies to give them flexibility going forward.

Each DCIG TOP 5 solution supports container technologies in some capacity. However, the features each one supports vary significantly, with support for Terraform the only commonality.

All the DCIG TOP 5 VMware alternatives in this edition support persistent storage. Other supported container technologies supported by four providers include the ability to run both VM and container workloads, a CSI driver, and Kubernetes orchestration.

- **Hybrid cloud support.** All DCIG TOP 5 VMware alternatives support a hybrid cloud configuration, which has become almost a prerequisite in today's world. However, how each one implements and supports a hybrid cloud configuration does vary.

Only one provider supports deploying its solution in general-purpose public clouds, which include Amazon Web Services, Google Cloud Platform, and Microsoft Azure Compute. This provider supports automated failover to the cloud, automating workload placement between on premise and the cloud, and offers multi-cloud management capabilities.

Organizations that want to use the cloud as a cloud storage target will find more providers from which to choose. Three providers each support Amazon S3 and any S3-compatible cloud object storage. Two support Google Cloud Storage and one supports Microsoft Azure Blob as a cloud storage target.

DCIG TOP 5 VMware Alternative Solution Profiles

Each of the following DCIG TOP 5 VMware alternative solution profiles highlights at least three ways they differentiate themselves from one another. These differentiators represent some of the primary reasons that an organization may want to consider one solution over another as a VMware alternative. Within each solution, an organization may find specific features that better meet its specific needs.

StorPool's integration with OLVM removes many of the steps associated with configuring SDS for Oracle Virtualization while simultaneously improving Oracle Virtualization's performance.

StorPool with Oracle Virtualization

Headquartered in Bulgaria, StorPool Storage partnered with Oracle to deliver a VMware alternative based on Oracle Virtualization, StorPool with Oracle Virtualization. StorPool offers software-defined storage (SDS) that integrates directly with Oracle Linux Virtualization Manager (OLVM). This integration removes many of the steps associated with configuring SDS for Oracle Virtualization while simultaneously improving Oracle Virtualization's performance.⁴

While delivered as an integrated solution, organizations must subscribe to Oracle support and license the StorPool software separately. StorPool licenses its SDS as a pay-as-you-grow subscription that includes managed services, backup, and disaster recovery.⁵ Oracle Virtualization itself carries no software license fee though most organizations want software support. To address this, Oracle offers Oracle Linux Premier Plus Support subscription for \$2,499 USD per year per physical pair.⁶

This separate licensing structure also carries over into how StorPool supports its software. StorPool decouples its SDS from OLVM to facilitate independent upgrades of the storage and virtualization layers.⁷

Additional features that StorPool with Oracle Virtualization offers that help differentiate it from competitive solutions include:

- **Can achieve sub-100 microsecond (μ s) storage latency.** Organizations may only expect to achieve sub-millisecond response times for their VMs using external all-flash storage arrays. StorPool with Oracle Virtualization can achieve in-VM storage latencies of under 100 μ s, even in a hyperconverged deployment model.

To achieve these low latencies, StorPool engineered its storage platform to minimize latency throughout the I/O stack. StorPool directly accesses NVMe drives and network cards while bypassing the Linux kernel.⁸ StorPool also pins its processes in RAM and to one or more dedicated CPU cores on each node.⁹

- **Permits the deployment of multiple nodes configured differently in a single cluster.** VMs and the applications they host may have specific needs. Some require more processing power while others require higher amounts of capacity. StorPool with Oracle Virtualization permits organizations to deploy compute-only, storage-only, and standard hyperconverged nodes within the same cluster.¹⁰ This architecture positions organizations to deploy high-RAM nodes for memory-intensive workloads and high-capacity nodes for data-intensive operations.
- **Includes built-in backup and disaster recovery.** StorPool includes VolumeCare for built-in backup and Disaster Recovery Engine (DRE), its purpose-built DR solution for KVM-based private clouds. VolumeCare creates and manages granular, consistent snapshots of volumes and groups of volumes, based on defined retention policies. Using VolumeCare, organizations may roll back to a previous state of a volume or multiple volumes.¹¹

DRE works with VolumeCare and supports per-VM replication with defined recovery point objectives (RPOs) and recovery time objectives (RTOs). DRE supports multiple DR models, including active-active, active-passive, many-to-one, and multi-site mesh configurations.¹²

To facilitate VM restarts that work well without creating new performance challenges, the Arcfra Enterprise Cloud Platform includes a granular rebuilding mechanism for VMs.

Arcfra Enterprise Cloud Platform

Based in Singapore, Arcfra makes its Enterprise Cloud Platform available as a full, software-defined infrastructure stack for on-premises IT environments. Arcfra offers compute, block and file storage, disaster recovery, Kubernetes, and networking services that organizations may license individually, or as an all-in-one solution. Arcfra's hyperconverged infrastructure (HCI) all-in-one solution includes its cloud operating system that facilitates scaling out a cluster to 255 nodes.

Arcfra provides organizations with four different options to license its Arcfra Enterprise Cloud Platform (AECF).

- **AECF Essential** provides organizations with Arcfra's core virtualization and storage services.
- **AECF VDI Essential** provides virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) storage for specific VDI scenarios. Though optimized for VMware now, Arcfra will launch a new VDI Essential edition in 2026 with no VMware dependencies.
- **AECF Standard** includes virtualization, storage, and Kubernetes services.
- **AECF Advanced** includes Arcfra's full enterprise cloud infrastructure stack.¹³

Additional features that Arcfra Enterprise Cloud Platform offers that help differentiate it from competitive solutions include:

- **Granular mechanism to identify hosts to perform VM restarts.** Any number of events can cause a VM to fail, prompting the system to initiate a VM restart. These events can include failures of a server node, network or storage services, or the VM itself, among others. To facilitate VM restarts that work well without creating new challenges, Arcfra includes a granular rebuilding mechanism for VMs.

Its VM Placement Group feature includes policies that restart a VM on a host only after the host meets specific conditions. Based on these policies, the VM Placement Group monitors and identifies hosts to use for a VM restart. It can ensure application-level fail overs do not occur to the same host or on a host that degrades VM performance. Also, if multiple VMs fail, it prioritizes the VM rebuild order to restart the most critical VMs first.¹⁴

- **Arcfra Operation Center provides a viable VMware vCenter alternative.** Identifying a viable VMware alternative involves more than just selecting a suitable hypervisor to replace vSphere. Most organizations also want to use one console to centrally manage the VMs and clusters across their IT environment. Using Arcfra Operation Center (AOC), organizations may perform many of the same tasks as vCenter, and even some new ones.

Using AOC, organizations may continue performing permission, system, and user management, one-click software upgrades, and cluster online/offline management. AOC also enables organizations to isolate anomalous VMs, modify hostnames through its GUI, and visualize their network traffic.¹⁵

- **Offers software-defined storage (SDS) in both block and file formats.** AECF includes both block, Arcfra Block Storage (ABS), and file, Arcfra File Storage (AFS), SDS as part of its software. Both ABS and AFS can create active-active clusters, support nearly 30 data redundancy configurations, and support snapshots.¹⁶

NodeWeaver optimizes its software for deployment in enterprises with cost- and power-sensitive edge and internet-of-thing (IoT) environments customizing its software to run on less-powerful chipsets.

NodeWeaver

Based in Europe and North America, NodeWeaver optimizes its software for deployment in enterprises with cost- and power-sensitive edge and internet-of-thing (IoT) environments. NodeWeaver customizes its software to run on less-powerful chipsets, such as Intel Atom, AMD Epyc, and AMD Ryzen.¹⁷ Its hyperconverged infrastructure software includes a built-in hypervisor that provides server virtualization, networking, software-defined storage (SDS), and centralized management.¹⁸

NodeWeaver offers a perpetual software license and a subscription-based monthly software license, with a trial license also available. NodeWeaver includes all software features as part of its software licensing that it licenses per physical server.

Additional features that NodeWeaver offers that help differentiate it from competitive solutions include:

- **Minimal hardware requirements with the option for single node deployments.**

Optimized for edge and IoT environments, a server node should minimally possess a 4-core CPU, 32GB of RAM, two NICs, and 100GB of storage capacity. NodeWeaver software only uses one CPU core, about 2GB of RAM, and 32GB of storage on each node.

A NodeWeaver cluster may consist of single node, though this cluster will not possess HA services. If starting with a single node, organizations may still incrementally grow that cluster and then introduce HA services.¹⁹

- **May use server hardware from multiple different providers and mix-and-match hardware in the same cluster.**

Enterprise edge and IoT environments can still represent the proverbial Wild West with respect to the hardware deployed in them. Furthermore, enterprises may need to re-purpose servers or use cost-effective, energy-efficient hardware.

To account for these different server hardware types, upon installation NodeWeaver automatically interrogates each server. During this interrogation, it determines and validates the server's manufacturer, configuration, chipset, etc. Only after it passes this inspection does NodeWeaver install its software. Once installed, the node may be added to any NodeWeaver cluster, regardless of the hardware used by other nodes.

- **Each cluster at each site automatically manages itself with minimal or no user intervention.**

Managing and maintaining hundreds, thousands, or tens of thousands of clusters across a distributed environment can quickly become nightmarish.

To mitigate this management overhead, NodeWeaver includes "Probes" on each cluster. These probes constantly monitor every available node's physical subsystem to determine its capabilities, usage, and optimization. Each NodeWeaver cluster then stores this information to respond to any change in the cluster.

Should anything then change in a cluster (new node, disk, network connection, etc.), NodeWeaver responds without user intervention. It uses this gathered information to automatically reconfigure the node, cluster, or both to account for this change.²⁰

Proxmox HA provides affinity mechanisms that can constrain placement of HA-enabled resources to specific nodes and define “keep together” or “keep separate” behavior.

Proxmox Virtual Environment

Based in Austria, Proxmox makes Virtual Environment (VE) an open-source server virtualization management platform for enterprise virtualization. Proxmox VE includes the KVM hypervisor with Linux containers (LXC), HA, and SDS and SDN. Organizations may manage Proxmox VE using a web-based GUI, CLI commands, REST APIs, or an Android app on mobile devices.²¹

Organizations may freely download Proxmox VE and use the software at no charge. Additionally, Proxmox offers four subscription tiers that provide access to the Enterprise repository and varying levels of support. These support levels range from lowest (Community) to highest (Premium):

- **Community**
- **Basic**
- **Standard**
- **Premium**

Each higher subscription tier offers faster response times and a higher annual ticket allowance. For example, Basic provides 3 tickets per year while Premium allows for an unlimited number of tickets. Proxmox currently charges €120/year/CPU socket for the Community tier up to €1100/year/CPU socket for the Premium tier.²²

Additional features that Proxmox VE offers that help differentiate it from competitive solutions include:

- **Can manage cluster from any node in the cluster.** Proxmox eliminates the need for organizations to set up a separate server to manage a Proxmox VE cluster. Using its multi-master design, organizations may manage a cluster using a web-based GUI on any node in a cluster. Through this interface, administrators may monitor and manage KVM guests, Linux containers, storage, or the cluster itself.²³
- **Offers an HA simulator included with Proxmox VE.** Most if not all VMware alternatives now offer HA functionality as part of their solution. Count Proxmox VE among this group of solutions. However, Proxmox includes an HA Simulator to help organizations learn how to use HA. Provided as part of the platform, the Proxmox VE HA Simulator permits organizations to test the behavior of a 3-node cluster with six VMs, by default.²⁴
- **Can create policies that influence the placement of VMs or containers.** Organizations cannot assume that Proxmox VE will, by default, optimally place VMs on another node during an HA event. In case of fencing or maintenance, the HA Manager will try to select an optimal recovery node. However, HA rules may constrain this process, which could result in suboptimal node placements.

Proxmox HA includes affinity mechanisms in its HA affinity rules. These affinity mechanisms constrain placement of HA-enabled resources. These rules mandate that these VMs only be placed on specific nodes (node affinity). Additionally, the rules mandate that certain VMs follow “keep together” or “keep separate” behavior (resource affinity) during an HA event.²⁵

Virtuozzo VHI addresses the challenge of providing consistent performance across clusters through automatic resource balancing with live migration.

Virtuozzo Hybrid Infrastructure

Virtuozzo Hybrid Infrastructure (VHI) ships as a full-stack virtualization platform integrating compute, software-defined storage (SDS), networking, and centralized management. Virtuozzo licenses VHI based on multiple parameters as it examines:

- The number of physical CPUs which can be installed on the physical server.
- Whether the license is time-limited or permanent.
- The number of virtual machines and containers that can simultaneously run on the physical server.
- The platform and architecture with which Virtuozzo Hybrid Server is compatible.²⁶

Enterprises, managed service providers, and cloud service providers may optionally obtain a VHI trial edition that covers up to 96 cores and 1TB of storage capacity.²⁷ Further, Virtuozzo provides managed migration services that include capacity analysis, platform planning, and execution guidance for ensuring a smooth transition from VMware.

Additional features that Virtuozzo Hybrid Infrastructure offers that help differentiate it from competitive solutions include:

- **Dynamic resource policies with live migration.** VHI addresses the challenge of providing consistent performance across clusters through automatic resource balancing with live migration. This feature continuously monitors host utilization and dynamically redistributes workloads to optimize resources. Under defined policies, VHI automatically triggers live migrations of running VMs from overloaded hosts to underutilized ones without service interruption.²⁸
- **External storage integration from the VHI admin panel.** Many environments rely on a mix of internal storage, external block or file arrays, and object storage services for use cases such as backup, archival, and data tiering. Using VHI, IT staff can manage and connect external iSCSI, FC, and NFS storage directly from the admin panel. It supports third-party storage systems compatible with OpenStack Cinder drivers.²⁹ Storage systems include those from providers such as Dell, HPE, Huawei, IBM, Infinidat, Lenovo, and more.³⁰
- **Integration with third-party backup providers.** As organizations evaluate VMware alternatives, compatibility with third-party backup and recovery platforms remains an important consideration. Further, organizations may already use a specific data protection solution and prefer to retain it when they adopt a VMware alternative.

VHI integrates with multiple third-party backup solutions, enabling organizations to potentially continue using their existing data protection platform. Virtuozzo supports enterprise backup solutions such as Commvault, as well as those focused on service providers like Acronis Cyber Protect and Storware Backup and Recovery.³¹

- **Predefined security policies for sensitive compute projects.** Manually configuring settings to secure new projects and workloads has become riskier due to inconsistent enforcement of security controls. Using VHI, administrators can define security policies that VHI automatically applies when creating a new project.³² This ensures new workloads inherit a secure baseline for consistent governance across workloads and environments.

VMware Alternative Inclusion Criteria

In considering solutions for inclusion in this report, a solution must meet the following criteria:

- Offers a virtualization solution for compute, networking and storage with a hypervisor.
- May be software-only that runs on standard server hardware or select OEM server platforms.
- May be a pre-integrated appliance that includes all needed hardware and software.
- May be an IaaS solution that includes all needed hardware, software, and technical support.
- Shipping and available by January 1, 2026.
- Sufficient information is available for DCIG to make an informed, defensible decision.

DCIG Disclosures

Providers of some of the VMware alternatives covered in this DCIG TOP 5 report are or have been DCIG clients. In that vein, here is some background to keep in mind when considering the information contained in this DCIG TOP 5 report:

- No provider paid DCIG a fee to research this topic or arrive at predetermined conclusions.
- DCIG did not guarantee any provider that its solution would be included in this DCIG TOP 5 report.
- DCIG did not imply or guarantee that a specific solution would receive a DCIG TOP 5 designation.
- All research is based upon publicly available information, information shared by the provider, and the expertise of those evaluating the information.
- DCIG conducted no hands-on testing to validate how or if the features worked as described.
- No negative inferences should be made against any provider or solution not covered in this DCIG TOP 5 report.
- It is a misuse of this DCIG TOP 5 report to compare solutions included in this report against solutions not included in it.

No provider was privy to how DCIG weighted individual features. In every case the provider only found out the rankings of its solution after the analysis was complete. To arrive at the DCIG TOP 5 solutions included in this report, DCIG followed a seven-step process to reach the most objective conclusions possible.

1. DCIG established which features would be evaluated.
2. The features were grouped into five general categories.
3. DCIG weighted each feature to establish a scoring rubric.
4. DCIG identified solutions that met DCIG's definition for a VMware alternative solution.
5. A survey was completed for software or a pre-integrated appliance (hardware + software) competitor to VMware.
6. DCIG evaluated each VMware alternative solution based on information gathered in its survey.
7. Solutions were ranked using standard scoring techniques. ■

VMware Alternatives // Rising Vendors Edition

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