Spectro Cloud

A field guide to your VM migration

Seven real stories of platform modernizations and VMware exits… and a handful of hard-earned best practices to help yours run smoothly.

What's your story?

Every business runs virtual machines. And almost every business now has some plan to modernize its estate and lean less heavily on VMware. That's about where the similarities end.

Some are mid-sized firms with a few hundred VMs and a renewal date circled on the calendar. Some are global enterprises with tens of thousands of workloads and a roadmap measured in years.

Some want a single platform for VMs and containers. Some need compute that keeps running in stores that lose connectivity for days. (And yes, some just want off a hypervisor that's become too expensive to love.)

We've helped all of them. What follows is a handful of those journeys (all anonymized for candor), some hard-won advice on running a migration well, and a quick tour of what we bring to the table. Think of it as a field report rather than a sales pitch.

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Want more insights?

We sponsored an ebook with The New Stack, authored by tech luminary Janakiram MSV. Running Virtual Machines on Kubernetes: A Practical Roadmap for Enterprise Migrations is your non-salesy, in-depth guide to all things VMs on K8s. Grab a copy here:

bit.ly/tns-vm-ebook

Seven real migration journeys, no two alike

No two modernization projects look the same. Here's a magnificent seven of anonymous (but very real) projects: which do you see yourself in?

1. The **global software company**: scale, and a plan to match

A large US enterprise software company came to us in 2024 with a tangle to untangle: Kubernetes spread across EKS, GKE and AKS with no portability between them, a sprawling VMware estate getting pricier every quarter since Broadcom, and fragmented tooling slowing every deployment. They wanted one platform for both their containers and their VMs... that's **50,000 VMs**.

We gave them consistent Kubernetes management across all three clouds, and our Virtual Machine Orchestrator (VMO) gave them a route to migrate production VMs off VMware with the power of KubeVirt under the hood.

The tech giant is now running real production workloads on VMO across multiple regions, databases included, with VM and container operations under one roof.

It's a multi-year program, and nobody pretended otherwise. The value of making the move showed up early, though, and it's still compounding.

2. The **global investment firm**: hybrid by design, hands-on by choice

A global investment management firm (tens of billions of assets under management, small but mighty 500-strong team), had most of its estate on VMware, but a sizeable and growing AWS footprint.

When we first met, it had set out to replace both Rancher and VMware and build a durable Kubernetes foundation for VMs and containers, across on-prem and cloud. Earlier attempts with other tools had stalled on predictable hard parts: the actual VM migration, storage, proxies, networking.

We stood up a PaletteAI self-hosted instance on their Amazon EKS footprint, slotted into their environment, and got VM migration working where others hadn't.

The feature parity between VMO and vSphere was there — they took that for granted. What sealed the deal was the belief that a smaller, **hands-on vendor** like us would show up when it mattered: the early-morning calls, the awkward ones, whatever it took.

A year on, the platform we built is the standardized foundation for their next generation of workloads, and it takes fewer platform engineers to run than the patchwork it replaced. Procurement ran through **AWS Marketplace**, making this the smoothest investment they've made in years.

3. The Nordic sovereign IT provider: a cloud of their own

A Nordic IT service provider, around 200 people running roughly **60 bare-metal servers** entirely on VMware, wanted to build a sovereign cloud it could offer its own public sector clients — and to get off VMware while doing it, after particularly punitive renewal cycle.

The wish list was specific: easy migration from VMware, a self-service white-labeled portal so clients can provision their own VMs and containers, usage metering down to the minute to feed their billing, and support for their existing storage.

After a stringent competitive bakeoff, the provider picked us — not least because our commitment to openness meant we could adopt and manage the clusters they'd already built.

Today our platform is the backbone of the Nordic provider's managed service, with VMs and containers under one control plane, metered and self-served by their customers, and VMware on the way out.

4. The travel-stop retailer: modern at the edge, ready for AI

VMs don't just run in the data center. One of the largest travel-stop and convenience retailers in the US runs apps across **750+ sites**, many remote enough that an outage could take a store offline for days and trigger a costly truck roll.

Their VxRail-and-VMware setup was getting expensive, with a renewal looming. But the CTO had bigger plans than just escaping to another hypervisor.

He wanted a modern edge platform that could carry today's workloads and tomorrow's AI: computer vision, real-time analytics, inference at the pump.

So we changed the conversation, with our good friends from AWS alongside us. Instead of swapping one VM platform for another, we built a Kubernetes-based edge platform that keeps stores running even disconnected; reuses their existing hardware; and is ready for AI at the edge whenever they are.

The first sites are live, with hundreds more rolling out this year, and a forecast saving of over **$8 million** versus the VMware renewal, and avoided nearly **$1.5 million** in new hardware.

5. The East African bank: a tender won on merit

One of East Africa's largest banks (hundreds of branches, thousands of agents, millions of customers) needed to modernize off a fragmented and costly VMware and Tanzu setup while keeping compliance, security and uptime watertight across a sprawling network.

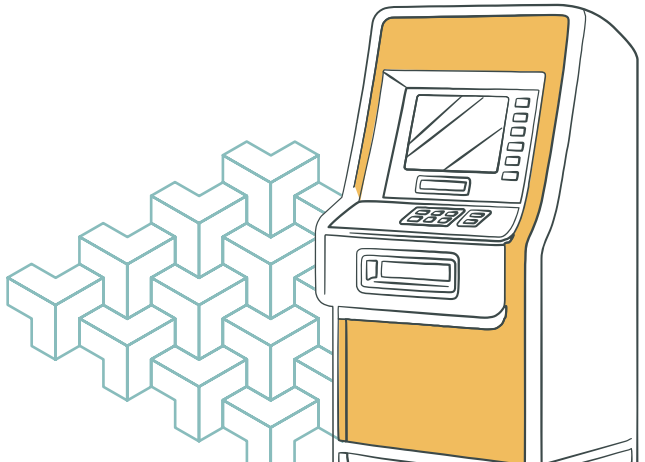
Red Hat looked like the safe choice, with its banking pedigree. The bank ran a public tender and picked us anyway.

Palette won on performance, flexibility and a predictable cost model, and on proving it could run core banking applications reliably and migrate live VMs without drama.

It's a phased move, delivered hand in hand with a **trusted regional partner**, building toward a full VMware exit: one unified platform for VMs and containers, and a likely blueprint for the rest of the bank's group companies.

"PaletteAI is a fantastic product... I only wish we had engaged with Spectro Cloud in our early days before making some of the decisions we'd made back then!"

Platform engineer, Nordic IT provider



6. The US military service: modern virtualization at the tactical edge

A branch of the US armed forces needed to run modern, containerized workloads at the tactical edge: forward-deployed, short on power, intermittent on connectivity, with no room for a data center's worth of kit.

VMware was built for the data center, and at the edge it's overkill — heavy, resource-hungry, and pricier than ever since Broadcom. But the mission-critical legacy applications it hosts, from vulnerability scanning to command-and-control, can't simply be switched off or rewritten overnight.

With PaletteAI VerteX (our **FIPS-certified** edition) and VMO, those legacy tools now run as VMs inside a Kubernetes cluster, alongside modern containers, on a single lightweight stack that fits on a forward-deployed kit and keeps running when the network doesn't.

A compliance scanner can sit right next to the systems it checks, generate its reports, and operate completely offline. Same security posture, far less weight.

7. The quant investment manager: locked down, and ready for AI

A quantitative investment management firm set out to modernize the infrastructure its research teams use to build and test models, under security rules most platforms can't meet: **fully air-gapped**, no internet, RHEL only, everything tied to its own internal root of trust. VMware vSphere was the incumbent for the VMs that research runs on.

We rose to the challenge. Running PaletteAI self-hosted and air-gapped, the firm now manages a bare-metal cluster with no outside connectivity and migrates its vSphere VMs into VMO with the VM Migration Assistant, Secure Boot and all.

Modern container workloads and migrated VMs run together on one compliant, locked-down platform.

And because that foundation is already in place, they're extending it into AI: a managed environment where their quants run machine-learning research on the same air-gapped stack. Tight security and modern, AI-ready infrastructure, without trading one for the other.

How to migrate the right way: notes from the trenches

Anyone who tells you that a VM migration is a push-button project is lying: it's all about the people, the teams and processes your business has built up over years. Our partners at LiveWyer have run enough migration projects to know where the bodies are buried, and they were generous enough to share some hard-earned insights.

Map the dependencies before you move anything. Complexity is manageable when someone can see all of it, but the danger is when there's a tangle of unknown dependencies that lives only in one engineer's head. Grill your teams early about whether a clear dependency map exists. If it doesn't, building one is your first job, not an afterthought.

Acknowledge complexity and scale. Migrations slow down when you get past the low-hanging fruit and into legacy licensing logic, apps with exotic networking or storage requirements, VDI, or huge VMs that strain data transfer windows to your landing zone. Be prepared for you and your vendor to roll up your sleeves and make tough decisions.

Respect that this is emotional. For the people who've run the old estate for years, modernization can feel like a verdict on their work. Bring them in, give them a role, take their worries seriously. You won't win everyone over, and that's fine. But you have to make sure that the holdouts don't drain the project of energy.

Agree what "good" looks like up front. The best predictor of a happy ending is a shared definition of success between all your internal teams and your vendors and partners, written down before anyone touches a workload.

"Success" is not just that the system stays up, but the real tolerances: recovery times, performance, the service levels between components. If those numbers don't exist yet, define them together.

Otherwise you'll finish the work with no agreed way to prove it worked, and when things get tense, as they occasionally do, numbers are the only language that cuts through.

Find your fixer, but don't create a bottleneck. One person with real authority and the right connections, the one who knows where to look, is worth more than five pairs of hands waiting on access via a Jira ticket.

When you're building your project team, be honest about the delivery risks: that one authority can be a bottleneck for every action and decision. And never rely on part-time project members. When someone says they'll give 50% of their time, read it as "you'll never see me."

Give the team permission to say no. A migration competes with everyone's day job, and the day job usually wins. The fix is a dedicated team with a name and a remit (a tiger team, a secondment, skunkworks, call it what you like) so people can decline business-as-usual with a clear conscience. Smaller organizations that can't spare a whole squad should at least be honest about how many people they'll need, and when.

Start contained, then grow. You don't have to migrate everything to prove the point. Pick one team and one set of workloads, get a clean win, build confidence, and expand from there. It's lower-risk for everyone (and it's precisely why our Liftoff Kit exists). The first couple of weeks is key to winning hearts and minds.

Use the tools, and still do the discovery. Automated dependency-mapping and assessment tools are properly useful, and we and partners like LiveWyer use them. Just don't expect to push a button and skip the discovery. The act of surveying the estate is what surfaces the relationships, the surprises and the awkward questions you'd otherwise hit halfway through a migration. There's no shortcut for the homework.

What we bring: the kit

Every VM migration project is different, so we've built a few different ways in. Here's the 1, 2, 3.

1. Launchpad for VMs — the easy button

Launchpad is a standalone VM appliance and the simplest way to start. It's a complete validated stack that boots on bare metal and runs on its own (VMs, container workloads, local access controls, migration tooling, the lot), even fully air-gapped. Ideal for a low-risk pilot, an edge site, or a regulated environment where nothing's allowed to phone home.

2. VM Migration Liftoff Kit — the derisked, outcome-driven path

For teams who'd rather not go it alone: a fixed price bundle that gives you the Launchpad plus professional services to get real production VMs migrated, with our team owning the outcome in a fixed timeframe. The best way to prove value and see results.

Learn more: spectrocloud.com/platform/vm-migration

3. VMO — the platform for modern virtualization

Virtual Machine Orchestrator (VMO) is our KubeVirt-based solution to bring VM workloads to your Kubernetes fleet, all managed by our PaletteAI platform with consistency at enterprise scale. It's the perfect solution for larger VM estates and a natural next step from a Launchpad.

Learn more: spectrocloud.com/fleet-orchestration/vms-on-kubernetes

40%+
potential savings vs VMware

3 days
to a scoped migration plan

12–18mo
to full ROI payback

More than just tech

When you work with us, you don't just get the tech. You get:

A partner ecosystem comprising some of the most seasoned VM migration experts, and alliances with all the product vendors that matter.

Easy contracting, including buying through the AWS Marketplace if that suits your cloud strategy.

And a team that's proven to get results: we serve global banks and family firms, service providers delivering to their own customers, and public-sector and edge deployments that have to run disconnected.

Perhaps most important, when you choose Spectro Cloud, you don't just have a place to run your VMs. You're set up for whatever comes next: AI factories, model-as-a-service, GPU-as-a-service, inference at the edge, all through the same platform. Modernize once, stay flexible.

What's your story?

However your estate looks today, and wherever you're trying to get to, there's a good chance we've helped someone make a similar move. Tell us your story. We'll help you write the happy ending.

Start the conversation:
spectrocloud.com/get-started

From chaos to control

With our PaletteAI platform, Spectro Cloud solves how enterprises and public sector organizations manage full-stack application and AI infrastructure in any environment: from edge to cloud, and from metal to model.

Using the power of cloud-native technologies like Kubernetes, we give platform engineers and operations teams flexibility to choose their perfect stack, while benefiting from complete repeatable consistency. We automate the full lifecycle of complex infrastructure at scale, for massive cost savings and better business outcomes.