MacStadium

Thumbtack's Transition from VMware to Orka® Platform

Thumbtack is the technology leader building the modern home management platform. As a dual-sided marketplace, the company revolutionized both how homeowners find and hire a pro to help with home projects, and how home service pros find and connect with homeowners who need help fixing, maintaining and improving their homes.

Before Orka Platform

For six years, the Thumbtack team used VMware vSphere ESXi in a MacStadium private cloud environment to manage its iOS app development workflow. That solution initially worked for them, but with the growth of the team and the app, they began to see the need for a faster, more efficient solution.

The Thumbtack team wanted to upgrade the underlying Mac hardware to the newest Apple silicon machines, but were blocked by VMware's lack of support for the new ARM-based processors. So when VMware announced in 2022 that it would no longer support macOS, Thumbtack began exploring other iOS workflow solutions.

Shifting to Orka Platform from VMware

"We needed to figure out our plans going forward," said Scott Southerland, a Thumbtack iOS staff software engineer.

The Thumbtack team considered GitHub Actions and Xcode Cloud, but ultimately opted for Orka platform because it provides direct control over the underlying machines, is affordable, is compatible with Apple silicon and enables Thumbtack engineers to speed up their testing cycles.

Since Thumbtack began using Macs with Apple silicon chips, Southerland and his fellow engineers believed Orka platform could make their daily tasks easier with automation and more efficient processing. Those include building

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Who:
Thumbtack has created a dual-sided, modern home management marketplace, that revolutionized both how homeowners find and hire a pro to help with home projects, and how home service pros find and connect with homeowners who need help fixing, maintaining and improving their homes.

Situation:
Thumbtack wanted to upgrade their underlying Mac hardware to the newest Apple silicon machines, but were blocked by VMware's lack of support for the new ARM-based processors.

Solution:
The thumbtack team transitioned to the Orka platform to manage their MacDevOps.

Impact:
Orka platform cut build times in half by eliminating the slowdown caused by many parallel jobs on the previous Linux network and bottlenecks in their network storage vanished, meaning transfer time decreased.

internal apps, developing cutting-edge code, conducting tests on simulators, building pull requests, debugging apps for pull requests, conducting master mergers without conflicts, and creating app release that they send to Apple.

MacStadium's Orka platform provided Thumbtack with a seamless way to transition from VMware. The MacStadium team created a proof-of-concept environment to allow the Thumbtack team to configure and learn test without disturbing their daily iOS and macOS development workflows. **"Learning how to use Orka was pretty seamless,"** said Southerland. He and the Thumbtack team created the images the team would need to spin up VMs for daily tasks and tested them rigorously before determining a date to cutover to Orka platform for their daily MacDevOps needs. That cutover process was simply pointing their Jenkins jobs to the new Orka platform VMs.

The Orka platform Difference

Orka platform slashed build times in half, from one hour to 30 minutes, by eliminating the slowdown caused by many parallel jobs on the previous Linux network. Bottlenecks in their network storage vanished, meaning transfer time decreased. The totality of improvements due to Orka platform's implementation means Thumbtack's daily workload has become more efficient.

The speed equated to "quite an improvement" in cost per compute, Southerland said. "With Orka platform, Thumbtack now has a virtualization platform that will support future Apple OS upgrades," Southerland said.

> "Orka platform has optimized our compute-function costs, made our cloning simpler, and cut our build and transfer times."

Thumbtack had to transition from VMware to Orka platform because of VMware's lack of future macOS support. The transition to Orka platform not only guaranteed support of the newest Apple silicon and all future macOS versions, but it also cut iOS build time in half, making Thumbtack's MacDevOps more efficient than ever.

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Scott Southerland
Thumbtack iOS
Software Engineer