Vacation package service provider books with HP for value
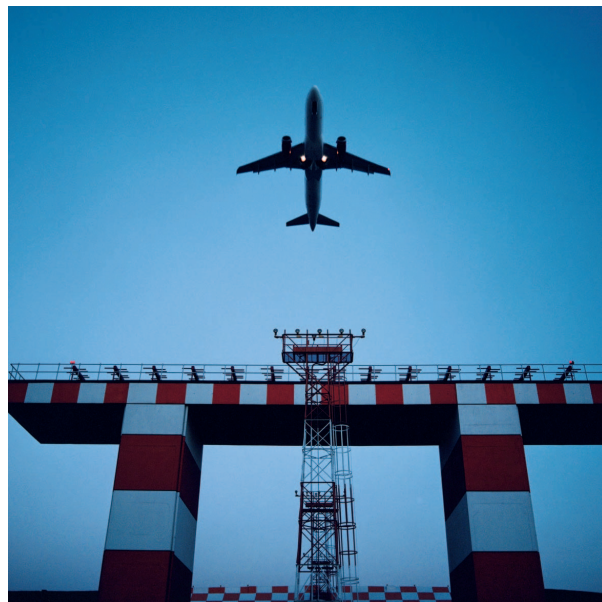
Customers get faster response times, lowered maintenance costs

"With HP's help, we were able to prove real value to both ourselves and to our customers. We are confident that will translate into additional sales of HP servers into our customer base."

—Moïse Levy, President of Softvoyage

Hardware obsolescence is a fact of life in today's IT environment. But while migrating existing applications to new hardware can be challenging, it can also deliver significant benefits, including improved performance and reduced cost of ownership.

The challenge

In the fall of 2001, HP announced that its line of e3000 servers would be phased out over the next several years. Softvoyage, a leisure travel industry software developer based in Canada, was one of the customers who would be affected: the company's travel services applications were developed to run on the e3000-series platform.

For Moïse Levy, president of Softvoyage, the announcement sparked a period of careful thought. "We had been developing on this platform since our company was founded in 1987," Levy explained. "When we learned the servers would ultimately be discontinued, we took the opportunity to ask ourselves whether it made sense to continue with HP."

Softvoyage offers a variety of applications for tour package resellers and wholesalers, ranging from back office operations to supplier contract management, reservations systems and web interface applications. For about half of its customers, Softvoyage maintains the applications internally as a service bureau (remote office application service provider). The remaining customers purchase

Softvoyage applications as standalone bundled hardware and software systems. Switching platforms, therefore, would be highly visible to Softvoyage's customer base.

The Softvoyage management team decided that the company's longstanding relationship with HP counted heavily in their decision. They also determined that, on paper, HP Integrity servers based on Itanium processors would be a workable platform for their applications.

But even after making a preliminary commitment to continue with HP, many questions remained.

"Our customers were asking us for specific performance metrics," said Christian Scott, vice president of development. "They wanted to be able to perform 7,000 bookings in any 10-hour period. They wanted sufficient online availability to support 50,000 requests in any 10-hour period. Regardless of how many users were trying to access the system, they wanted system log-in times to never exceed 30 seconds."

Another challenge was to migrate the existing terminal based application to a newer technology using a Java-based Speedware product.

The solution

To determine whether the Integrity servers could meet these performance requirements, Alvina Nishimoto, HP account manager, arranged for proof-of-concept funding

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through the HP Sun Eclipse program. Using that funding, HP set up an HP Integrity rx4640 server in the Toronto testing facility and let Softvoyage test its application both on-site and remotely, from Montreal.

"We would not have been able to duplicate these resources internally," Scott said. "The server loan was invaluable to our verifying the feasibility of the platform for our applications."

The results

The proof-of-concept was a resounding success. Testing demonstrated that the rx4640 servers not only met, but exceeded the performance requirements set by Softvoyage customers. "We demonstrated that users could exceed the specified rate of system queries and bookings. For example, they wanted to be able to accommodate 50,000 requests in 10 hours—we reached 82,000, and also achieved 7,000 bookings in only six hours. With the new servers, we also achieved log-ons of under three seconds, with a load of 2,000 active users," Scott said. The new system also exceeded customer requirements for ad-hoc printing.

Satisfied with the proof-of-concept results, Softvoyage was prepared to start the migration of its standalone and service bureau customers. With its new certified software ready, prospects for closing sales are very good—in part because of the excellent cost savings Softvoyage can promise.

"We have customers who are paying up to $50,000 a year on HP system maintenance. They'll see their costs drop to an average of $8,000 per year," Scott noted. "Needless to say, they are very excited."

Softvoyage's internal cost savings will be significant as well. In addition to lower maintenance costs, the company expects to see savings on programming costs, since there are more tools available for HP-UX than for the propriety operating system they ran on the older generation servers.

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At a glance

Company: Softvoyage

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Mission: Since 1987, Softvoyage has delivered innovative and robust IT solutions for the travel industry. Softvoyage solutions enable the management and the distribution of travel services for hundreds of North-American Travel Agencies, Tour Operators & Consolidators, and Travel Suppliers.

Softvoyage delivers value by providing travel suppliers with low-cost management and Web distribution alternatives and by empowering Travel Agents with robust shopping, comparison and booking tools.

Challenge

- Tour package ASP needed to replace legacy HP e3000 servers.

- Develop a new back office application using a Java based environment.

- Customers were requesting the ability to do more queries, bookings.

- Customers were requesting faster log in times, even during peak usage.

Solution

- HP Integrity rx4640 servers.

- HP-UX operating system.

- Speedweb Java technology.

- Eloquence database.

Results

- System accommodates over twice as many queries, bookings.

- Log-in times never exceed three seconds.

- Customer maintenance costs reduced from $50,000/year to $8,000/year.

For more information on how working with HP can benefit you, contact your local HP service representative, or visit us through the Internet at our world wide web address: http://www.hp.com

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