THE KINGFISHER GROUP CHOOSES RED HAT ENTERPRISE LINUX FOR CASTORAMA AND BRICO DEPOT STORES

In less than eight months, the third-largest home improvement retailer in the world reaches ROI and experiences ten-fold performance

FAST FACTS

Industry:	Retail
Geography:	Europe
Opportunity:	Due to the mass and complexity of information and commercial activity handled in each store, system reliability and availability are essential prerequisites for the IT system at Kingfisher. When Kingfisher knew that support would soon end for their UNIX and NT servers, they were faced with the challenge of renewing a vast IT architecture for their 240 Castorama and Brico Dépôt stores in France, Italy, Poland, Spain and Russia.
Solution:	Software: Red Hat Enterprise Linux Applications: Vision64, Time Navigator, Interpel, Dollar Universe, Oracle AS10G, with an Oracle 9i database and WEBFORMS Hardware: HP ProLiant ML 370 G4 with 8Gb memory, Dual-core-processors, 5X140 Gb disk in RAID
Benefits:	The Kingfisher Group is in the process of equipping 240 of its European outlets with Red Hat Enterprise Linux. Red Hat has enabled the Group to cut the number of servers it requires in half and make a return on its investment in just eight months, while delivering a ten-fold increase in performance. In Red Hat Enterprise Linux, the Kingfisher Group found a solution that allowed all of its requirements to be satisfied with a single server, and the ability to run both production tools and infrastructure services on the same box. This has translated into large cost-savings and even faster deployments and updates.

BACKGROUND

With 331 B&Q stores and brands such as Trade Depot and Screwfix Direct in the UK, 102 Castorama and 73 Brico Dépôt stores in France, 26 Castorama stores in Italy, 30 in Poland, 7 Brico Dépôt stores in Spain, and two in Russia, the British Kingfisher Group is the European leader in the home improvement and DIY market. The Kingfisher Group is also present in Turkey with the Koçta stores and in Asia with B&Q China, B&Q Taiwan and B&Q Korea, and has a major stake in Hornbach, the German leader in DIY Retail. The Kingfisher Group is the world's third-largest retailer in the DIY sector.

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OPPORTUNITY

Due to the mass and complexity of information relating to the logistics and commercial activity handled in each store, system reliability and availability are essential prerequisites for the IT system at Kingfisher. To optimise and standardize the entire group's IT infrastructure and to manage the information systems on an international scale, Kingfisher created its own IT systems organisation called Kingfisher IT Services.

Since 1997, Castorama and Brico Dépôt stores have been running an IT infrastructure comprised of two servers. One of the servers was a Digital UNIX Alpha server supporting production tools and commercial applications, as well as an Oracle v7 database and FORMS application. The second was an NT server for the infrastructure, covering the network, domains, printing, and file server. When Kingfisher learned that support would soon be ending for both the UNIX and NT servers, they were faced with the challenge of renewing a vast IT architecture for their Castorama and Brico Dépôt stores.

"In anticipation of the announced end of support, both for the UNIX and the NT server, we began to look into the idea of developing the store IT architecture, while still maintaining a distributed structure so that all our stores would remain autonomous in back-office terms," said Bernard Grulois, Architecture and Infrastructure Manager for Kingfisher IT Services, the Group's worldwide IT organisation.

SOLUTION

Kingfisher made the strategic choice to use open source solutions because the maturity and reliability allowed the Group to plan a migration with full confidence. When selecting a Linux distribution the choice was simple for Kingfisher IT Services. Stability and support were of prime importance, and the department decided Red Hat Enterprise Linux was the only option.

"Overall most of the open source distributions contained the features we needed, including infrastructure services. But only Red Hat offered a business-ready Linux distribution with the level of service, guarantee, and support that we required for the mission-critical information system that is needed for the smooth operation of Kingfisher's stores," said Grulois.

"WE ARE EXTREMELY SATISFIED WITH OUR CHOICE. We have achieved a return on our investment in less than eight months and **WE CONTINUE TO BENEFIT FROM THE ADVANTAGES RED HAT ENTERPRISE LINUX OFFERS**, IN TERMS OF MAINTENANCE, COST SAVINGS, AND HIGH SECURITY. In addition, we have seen an impressive improvement in performance. We have increased the speed of our system ten times and also improved the quality of overall service. As for delivery at the user level, it's excellent," said Grulois.

The architecture was designed in three parts. First came the production tools, which included:

- Vision64 for cable-casting-Time Navigator for back-up
- Interpel, file transfer tool
- The COBOL development language for batch processing
- The PERL programming language for script processing
- ISM for supervision and the Dollar Universe operating engine

The second part of the architecture was the database, which was comprised of Oracle AS10G, with an Oracle 9i database, and WEBFORMS for the technical building blocks (functional iso-perimeter). The third portion was SAMBA-activated under Linux, for all the infrastructure services.

For the hardware and integration, Kingfisher IT Services used HP as the sole supplier. Every Castorama and Brico Dépôt outlet is now equipped with Red Hat Enterprise Linux running on an HP ProLiant ML 370 G4 with 8Gb memory, Dual-Core processors, and 5X140 Go disk in RAID 1.

The software installation package was developed internally by Kingfisher IT Services and then transferred to HP, who was responsible for its installation on the servers. All the solutions were then put through the necessary tests by Red Hat and HP to ensure their conformity and to validate the Red Hat and HP certifications.

After a three month test phase in Spain, the servers were deployed in French, Italian, Polish and Russian stores.

BENEFITS

The Kingfisher Group has equipped all its 240 outlets in France, Italy, Spain, Poland and Russia with Red Hat Enterprise Linux. Red Hat has enabled the Group to reduce the number of servers it requires by half, enabling a return on investment in just eight months. At the same time, Kingfisher is benefiting from a ten-fold increase in performance. In Red Hat Enterprise Linux, Kingfisher IT Services found a solution that allowed all of its requirements to be satisfied with a single server and run both the production tools and the infrastructure services on the same box. This has translated into large cost-savings and even faster deployments and updates.

"Kingfisher has just opened a new Castorama outlet in Russia and the implementation of the new infrastructure went extremely well, despite the Cyrillic alphabet!" said Grulois.

For now, all of the modifications have been put on a master disk that will provide updates if they prove necessary. But in the future, Kingfisher IT Services will centralize updates with Red Hat Network.

"We are extremely satisfied with our choice. We have achieved a return on our investment in less than eight months and we continue to benefit from the advantages Red Hat Enterprise Linux offers, in terms of maintenance, cost savings, and high security. In addition, we have seen an impressive improvement in performance. We have increased the speed of our system ten times and also improved the quality of overall service. As for delivery at the user level, it's excellent," said Grulois.

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