



MARSALA TOWN COUNCIL IN ITALY OFFERS ADVANCED SERVICES TO ITS CITIZENS WITH RED HAT SOLUTIONS

FAST FACTS

Industry:	Government
Geography:	Italy
Opportunity:	The Town Council in Marsala created its first computer-based infrastructure 1981 and has been a pioneer in offering online services to its citizens. With increasing user numbers and the need for advanced resources, it looked for a solution to help control costs related to upgrading and maintenance without reducing the number of services available to its citizens.
Solution:	Software: Red Hat Enterprise Linux ES 4, Red Hat Cluster Suite Hardware: Two quad-core servers in clusters for production; one SAN; one ISA server; one mail server; one web server; one server backup (NAS); one backup tape drive
Benefits:	The Marsala Town Council saw significant cost reductions after migrating to Red Hat solutions. Its IT infrastructure experienced improved service performance levels too. Systems security and reliability have significantly increased with the adoption of Red Hat.

BACKGROUND

The municipality of Marsala is located in the province of Trapani in Sicily, Italy. It's responsible for 85,000 citizens and operates with about 1,000 employees. To simplify administration procedures, the citizens of the town are offered several free online services – those relating to the registry office, town planning, and electoral services. Online services have always been an important consideration for the Town Council, as they are a valuable asset to offer citizens with little or no charge at all.

OPPORTUNITY

The Marsala Town Council created its first computer-based infrastructure in 1981 and has since modified its IT structure several times. Fifteen years ago, Marsala decided to migrate to Unix, first using System 5 then SCO. Each migration strengthened the role of IT within the Town Council organization, bringing additional and more advanced services to citizens. Following the growth of services it offered, the Town Council looked to control costs – mainly those related to upgrades and maintenance – without reducing the number of services available to its citizens. In 2005, it decided to explore various Linux solutions and undertook a long testing stage.



SOLUTION

The Marsala Town Council ultimately found a high level of support and assistance in Red Hat solutions and chose a migration to Red Hat Enterprise Linux. In October 2006, a public tender was held that led to the implementation of the new operating system on the majority of the machines. The project was carried out internally, leveraging skills already present within the IT department. The migration from Unix to Linux was simple, linear, and easy. The support for the migration was provided directly by Red Hat and was "very precise and punctual. For the few issues that we could not handle on our own, Red Hat assisted us in an extremely professional and efficient manner," said Sergio Cacioppo, IT Area Manager at the Marsala Town Council.

The Marsala Town Council now has a highly advanced IT department, equipped with very high-tech servers where Red Hat Enterprise Linux plays the central role. All the services provided by the Town Council, both in the office and online, are based on Red Hat Enterprise Linux. Access to the online services is now easier and quicker for citizens, with no risk to the reliability and security of the Town Council's IT structure. Windows-based systems are now only used on the Town Council's system that handles Internet caching.

BENEFITS

The Town Council has enjoyed multiple benefits since its migration to Red Hat Enterprise Linux. Marsala's IT-related costs have been greatly reduced. The service quality has remained optimal, and performance levels have improved considerably too. "The solution we have adopted has made it possible to speed up all the calculation processes, reducing the times involved by more than 70 percent," said Cacioppo. "In the first year alone it enabled us to save more than €100,000."

"The economic benefits were immediate," added Cacioppo. "From the point of view of the performance levels, things changed immediately for the better. Labour intensive procedures, such as the reconstruction of the indexes, which used to require up to eight hours in the past, were now completed in just a few minutes."

"Labour intensive procedures, such as the reconstruction of the indexes, which used to require up to EIGHT HOURS in the past, were now completed in just a FEW MINUTES."

Marsala's Town Council has also experienced an increase in the reliability and security of its infrastructure - an important element considering that the Town Council's IP sites and domains are located within its internal infrastructure and not with external providers.

"It's extremely important that our services are always available to the users, with no interruptions caused by technical problems or hacker activity," said Cacioppo. "External attacks have caused us problems in the past, when our web security was based on Windows. Since we have migrated to Linux, this hasn't happened again."



The Town Council currently uses 18 servers - nine new-generation servers running Red Hat Enterprise Linux that are located in the internal server room, and nine additional servers located in the remote centres in accordance with a traditional client/server architecture. Every local centre has a two megabit geographic network. And the central unit has an eight megabit network. The ultimate objective of the town council is to centralise all the services on the nine servers located within the data centre based on Red Hat Enterprise Linux by 2008. All the structures are currently cabled with optical fibre and have encrypted and protected data networks. The Town Council plans to gradually move archives and procedures from the remote servers to the central servers, with a reduction of the number of servers and, therefore, further savings.

Because the Marsala Town Council has had such success with its current Red Hat Enterprise Linux implementation, it's also considering a migration of the council's clients and desktop to Red Hat Enterprise Linux.

"We would also like to extend the use of Red Hat Enterprise Linux to the desktops soon in order to offer our individual users the same security and reliability levels we now enjoy at a server level," said Cacioppo.

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