HP customer case study: Leading Austrian logistics expert easily transitions from AlphaServer to HP Integrity servers
Industry: MDI: Logistics

The transition to HP Integrity proves simple and rewarding for Knapp Logistik

"The transition from AlphaServer to our new Itanium-powered HP Integrity servers was very straightforward. The OpenVMS operating system is extremely stable. We now expect to reap the rewards of the new configuration Integrity servers will bring us." Robert Zöbinger, software developer, Knapp Logistik Automations GmbH

Objective:

Knapp Logistik Automations GmbH wanted to update its mission-critical COBOL-based application to attain better interoperability. It also wanted to ensure portability to a new platform, as its existing HP AlphaServers needed replacing.

Approach

- Employed HP strategic partner Acucorp to modernise the COBOL application and develop and deploy thin client technology incorporating a Windows-style Graphical User Interface.
- Selected two HP Integrity servers powered by Dual-Core Intel® Itanium® 2 processors running on OpenVMS to replace the AlphaServer environment.
- Selected an HP StorageWorks EVA8000 storage array to provide enhanced capacity for data storage.

IT improvements

- The COBOL application can now operate better with other programming languages and databases, and it is easy to port onto different platforms.
- A quick, smooth transition from AlphaServers to HP Integrity servers, which offer excellent price/performance and reliability.
- Storage capacity is scalable to meet the company's anticipated growth in data volumes.
- Unified HP management tools reduce maintenance time and made it easy to integrate Integrity servers into the environment.

Business benefits

- By future-proofing the existing COBOL application, rather than writing a new one, the business has saved money.
- The new technology has given the business a powerful and reliable platform with higher levels of functionality and flexibility on which to continue its growth.
- The company is able to enhance the services it provides to customers.

Knapp Logistik Automations has over fifty years of experience in delivering warehouse logistics and automation solutions. With a broad portfolio of services, including warehouse layout design and installation, staff training, software and technical operations, it has earned a reputation for delivering both innovation and efficiency to a wide range of global clients.

Solving future problems now

Knapp Logistik was facing significant IT issues that would, if not resolved, impact IT and business performance. The mission-critical application used and trusted to control the company's internal order processing, production planning, warehouse maintenance and stock replenishment was written in DEC COBOL – an aging computer language that severely limited the application's interoperability with other programming languages and databases, and also inhibited its portability to new or different platforms. The application's inherent lack of flexibility and restricted capacity for expansion needed to be addressed. In addition, the HP AlphaServer platform comprising two HP AlphaServer DS20, was being retired and so a transition to a newer, fully supported platform was also necessary.

A future-proof investment

To resolve these issues and make the necessary improvements, Knapp Logistik sought the trusted expertise of Acucorp, a strategic partner of HP, and a leading provider of COBOL modernisation solutions. Together, the two parties updated and upgraded the existing COBOL application – Acucorp extend® toolset, and deployed thin client technology incorporating a new Windows-style Graphical User Interface (GUI) to replace Knapp's old character-based screens. Robert Zöbinger, software developer, Knapp Logistik Automations, says, "Updating our COBOL application avoided a costly re-write and also future-proofed our investment by adding the capability for interoperability and portability. This ensured that we could easily transition to a new platform when we were ready."

Customer solution at a glance

Primary applications

- Knapp Logistik bespoke application (COBOL) controlling internal order processing, production planning, warehouse maintenance and stock replenishment.

Primary hardware

- 2 x HP Integrity rx2620 Servers with Intel Itanium 2 processors.
- HP StorageWorks 8000 Enterprise Virtual Array.

Primary software

- OpenVMS operating system (Version 8.2).
- Acucorp extend® toolset.
- HP Integrated Lights Out.

HP Services

- Technical support for Acucorp.

A simple, logical transition

With the COBOL modernisation, the thin client technology and the new GUI tested, proven and fully operational on Knapp's existing AlphaServer platform, the next step was to transition to HP Integrity servers, powered by Dual-Core Intel® Itanium® 2 processors.

"With the predictable retirement of the AlphaServer and the pressing need for increased functionality and compute power, the time had come to switch to a new platform. We selected HP Integrity rx2620 Servers supported by an HP StorageWorks EVA8000, and this platform has proved to be the right choice. The actual process of migrating from AlphaServer to the Itanium-based Integrity servers was simple. The whole process including testing and porting took just four weeks to complete," Zöbinger said.

High expectations

With the HP Integrity servers fully operational on OpenVMS, and supported by the installation of the EVA8000 storage array to cope with anticipated data growth, Knapp Logistik expects to realise both IT and business benefits very quickly.

"We selected the HP Integrity servers based on their performance, and their ability to reliably deliver the stability offered by OpenVMS – and we haven't been disappointed," declares Zöbinger.

HP Integrity delivers on its promise

HP Integrity servers have delivered the benefits Knapp wanted. "We have consolidated our environment by migrating from two Alpha-based servers onto two HP Integrity servers, and this has delivered a big improvement in our performance," stated Werner Quantschnig, software developer, Knapp Logistik Automations GmbH.

Unified management tools have made it easy to integrate the servers into their environment, and HP Integrated Lights Out software allows system administrators to manage and monitor systems remotely via a Web browser.

A trusted solution

Business continuity and availability are vital to Knapp as it needs an internal application that can reliably support key business processes that operate on a 24x7 basis. For this reason, it chose to continue with the OpenVMS operating system, as Quantschnig explains: "Knapp are long-time users of OpenVMS and we wanted to continue because we've found it to be an extremely stable and disaster-tolerant operating system, which makes it ideal for carrying our mission-critical applications. What's more, by combining the reliability of the new HP Integrity servers with the stability of OpenVMS, we'll greatly enhance both the continuity and availability of our applications, and ultimately, the service we provide to our customers."

To learn more, visit www.hp.com

Publication Number: 4AA1-0946ENW Written: April 2007

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