

Costs Down Profits Up

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A fast-growing retail organization eliminated downtime with SUSE Linux Enterprise Server and reduced administration time by 50 percent.

La Curacao is a fast-growing retail organization that relies on the 24/7 availability of its systems. Downtime is not an option, particularly during the month of December when the store's business increases by 500 percent. Moving to SUSE Linux Enterprise Server has eliminated downtime and provided a scalable platform for increased growth.

> Overview

La Curacao is a growing chain of department stores in the U.S. With an Hispanic focus, La Curacao ranks among the top 100 electronics and appliance retailers in the U.S. The company has 2,500 employees and 10 stores in California and Arizona.

> Challenge

As a dynamic retail organization, La Curacao requires high availability from the mission-critical systems that support its stores. Any downtime has a huge impact on sales. Last year, the company experienced unplanned downtime several times, often lasting as long as four hours.

The company's existing database implementation did not have robust clustering support and suffered from performance bottlenecks. All store inventory and pricing is stored in a central database, so performance was critical to improve the responsiveness of its point-of-sales systems.

La Curacao also continues to expand its business, opening new stores and hiring new employees. Moving to a 64-bit operating system would provide the scalability and performance to support its fast-growing business.

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Eryk Szachniewicz
Software Development Manager
La Curacao

> Solution

La Curacao evaluated several options, including Red Hat, UNIX and Microsoft Windows, before selecting SUSE Linux Enterprise Server with its High Availability Storage Infrastructure.

“Reliability was our highest priority and we needed something easy to manage,” said Eryk Szachniewicz, software development manager at La Curacao. “Linux became the obvious choice for us as it is more secure and could give us significant cost savings. A comparative UNIX platform would have cost us three times as much.”

La Curacao worked with Novacoast, a Novell Platinum partner, to implement SUSE Linux Enterprise Server in a clustered environment on HP ProLiant servers. The High Availability Storage Infrastructure included in SUSE Linux Enterprise Server provides clustered support for the company's mission-critical InterSystems Caché database.

“Our database is the core of all our systems and is the foundation for 95 percent of our business,” said Szachniewicz. “SUSE Linux Enterprise Server provides unparalleled support for our business with a clustered environment. We've had absolutely no failover in our production environment.”

The High Availability Storage Infrastructure in SUSE Linux Enterprise Server includes high availability service and application clustering by integrating open source components including Heartbeat, Oracle Cluster File System, Logical Volume Manager and Enterprise Volume Manager. The multi-node failover support in Heartbeat keeps La Curacao's stores running without interruption, particularly important in December when the company's business increases by 500 percent.

“La Curacao now has a pretty hands-off environment that is basically maintenance-free,” said Dan Elder, Linux services manager at Novacoast. “With SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, we've implemented a front-end cluster and some backup database servers for solid business continuity.”

Having a Linux platform makes it easy for La Curacao to scale its business with the ability to quickly add new servers. The company's database now runs on multiple servers which have eliminated the performance and memory problems of the past. With reliable systems, the IT staff spends significantly less time managing systems.

“Our systems don't ever go down,” said Szachniewicz. “We can now manage our systems from a central location using the remote management capabilities of SUSE Linux Enterprise Server. Gone are the days of having to do night maintenance.”

With a high availability Linux platform, La Curacao can now open new lines of business, including more e-business opportunities that require 24/7 availability.

“We have to be able to handle thousands of users at the same time who all demand high performance. SUSE Linux Enterprise Server allows us to handle peak times without any downtime.”

Eryk Szachniewicz
Software Development Manager
La Curacao

“We had an excellent experience working with Novacoast,” said Szachniewicz. “They are extremely professional and responsive and allowed us to complete a seamless implementation. Having a good partner is a huge part of our success and they certainly exceeded our expectations.”

Moving forward, La Curacao plans to upgrade many of its file and print servers to [Novell Open Enterprise Server](#) to further leverage its Linux environment.

> Results

By implementing SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, La Curacao created a high availability platform for its

mission-critical systems for a third of the cost of a comparative UNIX system. Its two-node cluster, based on the High Availability Storage Infrastructure, is easy to manage and has eliminated downtime. The company can easily add new servers to accommodate rapid growth, without having to hire more IT staff.

Moving to a Linux platform has reduced administration time by 50 percent, freeing up the IT staff to focus on other projects such as database optimization and user interface design.

“Without Novell, it would have been impossible to grow our business the way we have,” said Szachniewicz. “We have to be able to handle thousands of users at the same time who all demand high performance. SUSE Linux Enterprise Server allows us to handle peak times without any downtime.” **N**

Article Summary

Products and Services:

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server

Results:

- Implemented a high availability environment for one-third the cost of a comparative UNIX system
- Eliminated downtime of its mission-critical database
- Reduced administration by 50 percent
- Created a platform to support rapid growth