



QUINN-Insurance

QUINN-Insurance, the second-largest insurer in Ireland, has chosen SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server as the backbone for its rapidly growing Internet sales channel. Running on more than 20 servers, the SUSE Linux Enterprise environment handles approximately 85,000 insurance quotations daily, combining high availability and performance to deliver optimal service to potential customers.

Overview

Established in 1996 as part of the diversified Quinn Group, QUINN-Insurance has transformed the market for general insurance products in Ireland. The company introduced a direct-sales model, conducting business with individuals and brokers via dedicated call centres and a major Internet site. With more than 1 million customers on its books, QUINN-Insurance is now expanding into other European markets.

Challenge

QUINN-Insurance's reputation for excellent customer service and value brought a rapidly increasing number of customers to its Web site. To manage this significant growth in traffic and ensure that it could continue to offer a fast and reliable service, the company needed to upgrade its core Web-serving platform.

QUINN-Insurance was using the open source Apache HTTP Server software to run its Web site on a variety of Linux* distributions. As the company built up new partnerships with other Web-based retailers and insurance brokers—including Tesco and insurance comparison sites such as confused.com, goccompare.com and moneysupermarket.com, to name but a

few—it wanted to be able to handle a significant increase in transactions securely and reliably.

The company's insurance databases and transaction processing systems run on IBM* WebSphere* on the IBM System i5* platform. The company aimed to build a new Web services architecture on Intel processor-based servers that would effectively integrate its WebSphere systems.

Solution

Working with SecureLinx, a leading Linux and infrastructure specialist in Ireland, QUINN-Insurance exhaustively tested a variety of distributions before selecting SUSE Linux Enterprise Server as its new backbone for Web services. The company deployed SUSE Linux Enterprise on more than 20 customised Dell* servers, with a fully redundant backup infrastructure in a second location for added resilience.

"We undertook intensive testing to find the right platform to support our Web-based business, looking in particular at integration with IBM WebSphere and the ability to handle very heavy loads," said CJ Johnston, IT Server & Desktop Manager at QUINN-Insurance. "SUSE Linux Enterprise provided the best

QUINN-Insurance at a glance:

Provider of general insurance via telephone and Internet channels

■ Industry:

Insurance

■ Location:

Ireland

■ Solutions:

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server

■ Results:

- Standardised on SUSE Linux Enterprise for all Web services
- Increased security, performance and availability
- Increased Web site capacity to handle four times as many quotes
- Absorbed significant increase in Web traffic without loss of performance

"SUSE Linux Enterprise provided the best combination of resilience, security and performance—and we achieved a trouble-free deployment."

CJ Johnston

*IT Server & Desktop Manager
QUINN-Insurance*



“SUSE Linux Enterprise is both highly responsive and easy to secure—helping us to keep our service fast, reliable and safe for our customers.”

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Deploying the new Web services architecture took about three months to complete, and the Linux-based infrastructure now handles approximately 85,000 insurance quotations every day, both from direct visitors and as automated requests from partner sites.

“A growing number of enquiries are reaching us through one-stop-shop brokers and price-comparison sites, where a consumer enters their details into a single form which is then automatically passed to multiple insurers,” said Johnston. “The robust platform provided by SUSE Linux Enterprise enables us to handle this significant load with no loss of performance or availability.”

Security is usually the number one concern when running a transactional Web site, and **QUINN-Insurance** drew on the expertise of SecureLinux consultants and its own in-house team to minimise the possibility of unauthorised intrusion.

“SecureLinux identified potential pitfalls in our planning, and helped to steer us in the right direction—the support was excellent,” said Johnston. “SUSE Linux Enterprise offers very robust security with plenty of configuration options—and of course we also have heavy-duty firewalls, intrusion protection and anomaly detection countermeasures around our systems.”

As **QUINN-Insurance** continues to expand its internet operations, it now has a standard operating system—SUSE Linux Enterprise—

which will keep training and deployment costs low. The company is now considering SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop for a future project to refresh the desktop environment for its 4,000 employees.

Results

QUINN-Insurance saw immediate benefits from moving its Web services architecture to SUSE Linux Enterprise Server. The responsiveness and stability of the company’s Web site have both increased, despite continuing rapid growth in the total number of visitors and in the size of its insurance product portfolio.

“We’ve already started to see a healthy return on investment from our standardisation on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server,” said Johnston. “The Web site is considerably more responsive for end users, and we now typically handle four times as many quotes as before. Automated XML requests from partner Web sites are completed and returned within seconds.”

With a single, standard operating system supporting all Internet-based activity, the support burden for the **QUINN-Insurance** IT staff is lower, freeing up skilled employees to work on other projects. The company is planning to implement Novell® ZENworks® Linux Management to further automate administration of the Web server environment.

“The key benefits of Linux for **QUINN-Insurance** are performance and security—from our standpoint, they’re practically inseparable,” said Johnston. “SUSE Linux Enterprise is both highly responsive and easy to secure—helping us to keep our service fast, reliable and safe for our customers.”



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