

SUCCESS STORY



ŻABKA POLSKA AT A GLANCE

INDUSTRY

Retail

LOCATION

Poland

SOLUTIONS

- Standards-based Systems Management

OVERVIEW

- Żabka Polska centrally manages its IT resources across a 2000-store retail network, which provides challenges in support and service roll-out.
- Żabka Polska decided to use SUSE Linux Enterprise together with Windows, as the Microsoft/Novell agreement provided high quality local support and effective interoperability.
- Żabka Polska has reduced the roll-out time of new services by 50%, reduced support costs and cut its hardware and software spending as a result of the Microsoft/Novell interoperability agreement.

ŻABKA POLSKA

Żabka Polska manages 2000-store retail network with SUSE Linux Enterprise and Windows

Based in Poland, Żabka Polska operates nearly 2000 convenience stores throughout the country. The stores are open from 6am to 11pm, 7 days a week, and offer a wide range of groceries and household products at competitive prices.

To support its business, Żabka Polska operates a heterogeneous IT environment presenting a constant management challenge for the company's IT department. This includes remote management of the servers and IT applications in each store across the whole country, without support from local administrators.

Costs must also be tightly controlled to help the profitability of the overall business, both by closely managing investment in new stores and by reducing maintenance costs where possible.

To introduce new services and have them promptly rolled out to its stores, Żabka Polska's IT systems require high flexibility. Adding to this, there is a large volume of data generated by the chain on a day-to-day basis which requires ongoing and effective management.

INTEROPERABILITY FOR RELIABILITY

While Żabka Polska had previously used self-supported Linux for some of its stores, this was placing limitations on the level of service the IT systems could provide. "We wanted to build a solution based on more of a modern system which would secure operational stability, as well as lower investment and maintenance costs," said Maciej Kłaskala, IT Director at Żabka Polska. "Another vital issue was enabling rapid distribution of future changes without having to stop the functioning of the stores."

The company therefore decided that it needed to move to an increased level of professional support and service. "When choosing a system platform for our retail outlets we were considering different open source systems – due to the implementation scale it was vital for us to have good local support in Poland."

"Microsoft products have been used in our company for a long time," continued Kłaskala. "When we were selecting a platform for our shops, the interoperability agreement between Novell and Microsoft was a significant factor for us."

Żabka Polska runs many of its business applications on SUSE Linux Enterprise, which runs on Intel-based servers in its headquarters, and on an Intel platform in its stores. Its reporting systems at its headquarters all run on Windows, specifically on Intel-based Dell PCs.

"The main benefit of the Microsoft/Novell partnership is the achievement of such a high level of reliability in our very extended and dispersed IT environment."

Maciej Kłaskala
IT Director
Żabka Polska

The store-based servers run an application developed in-house to serve the outlets and deliver the required information to Żabka Polska's headquarters for centralised management of the supply chain and store network. A high level of interoperability between Linux and Windows is essential to transfer this data consistently.

EFFICIENT AND COST-EFFECTIVE SUPPORT

Due to the centralised management and the interoperability of its SUSE Linux Enterprise and Windows systems, Żabka Polska is now able to minimise the intervention time required at its 2000 stores, thus reducing maintenance costs and improving uptime.

"The main benefit we receive from the Microsoft/Novell interoperability agreement is the peace of mind that we have chosen a Linux platform that delivers such a high level of reliability in our very extended and dispersed IT environment," said Kłaskala. "This is at least in part due to the move from a self-supported to a commercial subscription for SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, and is demonstrated by the lower number of support incidents and on-site visits."

"Our shops have to work continuously - the reliability of systems was our priority," said Kłaskala. "Thanks to central monitoring we are now able to fulfil our customers' needs and provide them with an attractive and up-to-date range of goods in our stores."

"Supporting our growing retail network has also become easier - the same Help Desk section is now able to service a much higher number of shops, and the average time to handle each incident has been considerably shortened," continued Kłaskala. "We reduced support costs due to central management and by using consolidated Linux solutions – SUSE Linux Enterprise Server with AutoYAST and ZENworks Linux Management – which are supported by both Microsoft and Novell."

The Intellectual Property (IP) reassurance provided by the Microsoft/Novell agreement has been a benefit to Żabka Polska, as Kłaskala explained: "Maintaining IP is important to us, which is why having peace of mind on IP issues backed up by Microsoft and Novell working together is so reassuring."

Speeding up the roll-out of new services is also an important benefit, as Kłaskala commented: "We are now able to expressly fulfil the needs of our customers because we can introduce new services faster. In fact, due to the interoperability agreement between Microsoft and Novell, we were able to cut the time needed for the implementation of new system versions in half."

In addition to reducing administrative and support costs, there have also been hardware and software savings for Żabka Polska. "The Microsoft/Novell agreement has allowed us to reduce hardware and software costs as we are able to run business applications in our shops on the SUSE Linux Enterprise platform with high quality local support. Thanks to the agreement, we expect to lower these costs by approximately 20%," said Kłaskala. "With a mixed operating system environment, we can use the best available solutions, provided and supported by IT leaders."

For the future, Kłaskala sees opportunities from virtualisation: "Right now we are in the middle of testing some elements of our IT environment to explore the potential advantages of virtualisation. We are very open to the cost and environmental benefits, not least due to server consolidation and reduced power consumption."

THE MICROSOFT-NOVELL AGREEMENT

As part of the five-year Microsoft-Novell agreement, announced Nov. 2, 2006, Microsoft can make subscription certificates available for customers to redeem, to receive SUSE Linux Enterprise Server support services directly from Novell. Since the announcement, Novell has invoiced more than 44 percent of the SUSE Linux Enterprise Server subscriptions from the Microsoft and Novell collaboration agreement. For more information, visit www.moreinterop.com

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