



Municipality of Vårgårda

With application and database servers at the end of their usable life and failing to offer the required stability, the Municipality of Vårgårda chose new servers with SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server as its strategic operating system. The organisation determined that consolidating to a smaller number of clustered systems would reduce the total cost of ownership, improve reliability and cut energy consumption.

Overview

Municipality of Vårgårda is a municipality to the north-east of Gothenburg in Sweden, approximately 150 km south-west of Stockholm. The municipality serves a population of around 11,000 people, providing local services such as schooling, libraries, the fire service and civil disaster protection.

Challenge

The Municipality of Vårgårda IT department supports a large user community, for students and teachers in local schools as well as the municipality staff.

IT systems at the Municipality were reaching the end of their useful lives, with a variety of databases, including Oracle*, for the most part running on Microsoft* Windows* Server. Service reliability was starting to suffer and individual servers had reached the limits of their processing capacity.

To meet these challenges and to reduce administration and maintenance costs, the IT team looked at consolidating workloads to a smaller number of new, more powerful servers. The objectives were both to solve the reliability issues and to implement a scalable solution. With consolidated workloads, it became particularly important to ensure that

the system reliability was improved, which led the team to consider the use of both virtualisation and clustering.

Solution

The Municipality of Vårgårda had chosen SUSE Linux Enterprise Server as its strategic operating system for its databases, using Oracle Real Application Clusters to provide additional protection against downtime. Following the success of this original project, the IT team reviewed its application server environment. The Municipality was running a number of mission-critical applications on servers that were also reaching the end of their useful lives.

The Municipality of Vårgårda initially replaced three servers running Windows Server 2003 with a single physical system running SUSE Linux Enterprise Server. The organisation took advantage of the integrated Xen* virtualisation technology in SUSE Linux Enterprise Server to virtualise and consolidate the Windows servers, providing separate environments for human resources, information reporting and employee self-service applications. Following this early success, the Municipality replaced a further 25 physical servers with additional Xen virtual servers running on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server.

Municipality of Vårgårda at a glance:

Municipality to the north-east of Gothenburg, Sweden

■ Industry:

Government

■ Location:

Sweden

■ Products and Services:

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server with built-in Xen virtualisation
PlateSpin Orchestrate

■ Results:

- *Reduced operating costs by up to 30 percent*
- *Eliminated more than 25 physical servers*
- *Cut power consumption and cooling requirements*

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Mikael Andersson

*Chief Architect
Municipality of Vårgårda*

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Chief Architect
Municipality of Vårgårda

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“SUSE Linux Enterprise Server includes built-in Xen virtualisation technology, making it an ideal platform for server virtualisation,” said Mikael Andersson, Chief Architect for the Municipality of Vårgårda. “For the Municipality of Vårgårda, Xen offered better functionality than VMware* or Microsoft Hyper-V*, and we could support a greater number of servers at lower total cost.”

The Municipality of Vårgårda achieved its move to virtualisation rapidly and with relative ease, thanks in part to the integration between Xen and SUSE Linux Enterprise Server. The organisation is now using PlateSpin® Orchestrate from Novell to manage its numerous virtual servers. PlateSpin Orchestrate enables the IT team to provide high availability for virtual servers, to rapidly set up new virtual environments by cloning existing ones, and to automatically re-allocate resources across different virtual servers as requirements change. This significantly reduces administrative workload, and frees up skilled staff to work on other projects.

Results

By using the Xen virtualisation technology built into SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, the Municipality of Vårgårda has reduced the number of physical servers it requires, generating significant savings in floor space, cooling and energy consumption. The move to virtualised servers and the deployment of PlateSpin Orchestrate has reduced the administrative workload for IT staff while improving service levels.

“By leveraging Xen virtualisation and PlateSpin Orchestrate, we have reduced our operational costs by 20 to 30 percent,” said Andersson. “In the past, when new workload requirements arose we would need to specify, order and configure a new physical server. Even if we had a machine available, that would take at least four hours. With Xen virtual servers on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, it now takes just ten minutes to build and deploy a new environment.”

The long-term plan at the Municipality of Vårgårda is to move almost all application servers into virtualised environments. This will give the municipality the ability to grow without disruption by adding new processing power to existing virtualised environments as workloads rise. It will also minimise the long-term costs associated with acquiring new server hardware, servicing and powering it throughout its useful life, and then disposing of it.

“The main benefit so far of introducing Xen virtualisation on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server has been the cost savings,” said Andersson. “Today, we have a smaller number of physical systems to manage, and this translates not only into reduced energy costs but also into increased reliability. Server virtualisation on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server enables us to achieve greater business value from a smaller and more cost-effective IT infrastructure.”



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Contact your local Novell Solutions Provider, or call Novell at:

France
+33 1 55 62 50 00

Germany
+49 211 56 31 0

Italy
+39 02 360 46 335

Netherlands
+31 10 286 44 44

Poland
+48 22 537 5000

Russia
+7 495 697 1914

Spain
+34 91 640 25 00

Sweden
+46 8 477 41 00

Switzerland
+41 43 456 23 00

South Africa
+27 11 322 8300

United Kingdom
+44 1344 724 000

Novell, Inc.
404 Wyman Street
Waltham, MA 02451 USA