



Jiangsu Province Rural Credit Co-operative Union

Jiangsu Province Rural Credit Co-operative Union (JPRCCU) consolidated thousands of SCO* UNIX* servers located across 2,000 branches to a smaller number of SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server systems running in county data centres. This helped to reduce server numbers by 90 percent and costs by 60 percent while improving reliability and availability.

Overview

JPRCCU was founded in 2001 as a pilot for reform in China's rural credit cooperatives. Based in Nanjing, the Union provides credit and banking services for rural corporations across Jiangsu Province, and operates 31 banks. As of December 2008, it has nearly 50 million customers, 478.5 billion Yuan (US\$ 70 billion) in deposits and 344.6 billion Yuan (US\$ 50 billion) in loans.

Challenge

With more than 3,000 computers across 2,000 branches in Jiangsu Province, all needing to connect to central banking systems, JPRCCU's IT infrastructure was complex and difficult to manage.

Each branch had a computer running SCO UNIX as a front end for the central system. These computers were mostly low-end desktop machines, lacking the reliability of enterprise-class server hardware. As a result, hardware failures were relatively common, and IT staff frequently had to travel across the province to fix or replace faulty machines. Some branches are located up to a day's journey from the nearest county IT team, so a failure could lead to significant downtime, as well as expense.

"We realised that by consolidating and centralising our IT infrastructure, we would be able to achieve considerable cost savings as well as improve availability and customer

service," said Mr. Wei Chen, Vice Manager of Operation Maintenance Department at the Information and Clearance Centre of JPRCCU. "We also wanted to move away from SCO UNIX to an operating system that would be more compatible with modern hardware."

Solution

The IT department designed a new architecture: thin-client terminals in each branch would link to front-end servers in county data centres, which would in turn link to the central banking systems. The organisation chose Intel* processor-based servers from IBM and HP, then evaluated operating systems.

"We decided a Linux* operating system would be the right choice in terms of security, reliability, cost-efficiency and compatibility with the hardware," said Mr. Chen. "We tested both SUSE Linux Enterprise Server and Red Hat* Enterprise Linux, and decided on the Novell option. We felt that Novell provided better training resources and technical support, which was vital because we needed to train almost 500 IT staff to help us perform this large-scale implementation."

The IT team completed the implementation in less than three months, and it has been live for more than nine months without problems. Consolidating onto the new front-end servers has reduced the number of machines that JPRCCU needs to manage by approximately

Jiangsu Province Rural Credit Co-operative Union at a glance:

Provides loans and deposit management for 50 million customers

■ Industry:

Financial Services

■ Location:

China

■ Products and Services:

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server

■ Results:

- Consolidated thousands of computers, reducing hardware needs by 90 percent
- Reduced hardware and software licensing costs by 60 percent
- Simplified maintenance by centralising IT infrastructure in fewer data centres

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*Vice Manager of Operation Maintenance Department
Information and Clearance Centre
Jiangsu Province Rural Credit Co-operative Union*



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90 percent, as each of the new servers can handle requests from more than 100 user terminals simultaneously. The Union now has three to four front-end servers in each county data centre, which can be managed easily by the small local IT teams.

“The Novell technical helpline has been very useful, both during the implementation and for ongoing support,” said Mr. Chen. “When one of our local IT teams has a question about SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, they can get an expert answer almost immediately. This level of service puts Novell well ahead of most other software vendors in China.”

Results

Centralising and consolidating the IT infrastructure has reduced JPRCCU's IT costs by approximately 60 percent, as a result of the reduction in the number of servers required and the more cost-effective SUSE Linux Enterprise Server operating system.

In addition, since there are now only a few servers per county, instead of tens or hundreds of unreliable PCs at individual branches, the maintenance and support costs have fallen dramatically.

“The overwhelming advantage of the new architecture is that it practically eliminates the need for IT staff to travel to individual branches,” said Mr. Chen. “If a thin-client terminal fails, staff at the branch can just swap it for a new machine—there is no need for specialist IT expertise. Moreover, with the servers located at the county data centres, our IT teams are able to fix them immediately if something goes wrong.”

This also translates to a better customer experience. Since faults can be fixed more quickly, individual branches enjoy higher levels of availability—helping them provide more reliable and continuous service to customers. Equally, since the new infrastructure is more flexible, it is easier to set up new branches and support the growth of the business.

“Choosing SUSE Linux Enterprise Server from Novell has had a positive effect on both the day-to-day operation of our branches and the long-term development of our business,” said Mr. Chen. “Centralisation of IT infrastructure is becoming a trend in the Chinese banking sector, and it is important for us to lead the way in terms of modernising the industry.”



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