



KEEPING

NEWS HOT



OFF

THE PRESS

THE DETROIT FREE PRESS TURNED TO DELL FOR RELIABLE PCs, COST-EFFECTIVE SERVERS, AND A STORAGE SOLUTION THAT PROVIDES INCREASED CAPACITY AND FASTER BACKUP



DETROIT FREE PRESS

ONE of the major metropolitan newspapers serving Detroit and southeastern Michigan, the Detroit Free Press has a circulation of approximately 360,000 and offers both a printed newspaper and a full-service online news Web site. Because the newspaper relies on technology to gather, edit, and report information, the paper's IT staff must ensure that its entire infrastructure is running optimally, whether in the server room, the newsroom, or the field.

As the Detroit Free Press was reporting on the latest changes and important events in the outside world, the newspaper's IT staff was also busy revolutionizing the organization's IT infrastructure. For years, the newspaper had relied on various vendors

for its PC and server hardware needs, but decided in 2000 to seek out more stable desktop and notebook computers and more cost-effective servers. The newspaper also needed to implement a storage area network (SAN) to meet the capacity demands of its growing file archives.

Journalists in the field require high-performance, reliable notebooks

For journalists on assignment in the field, notebook computers are the lifeline to the newsroom. According to Stephen Moun-teer, assistant technology editor at the Detroit Free Press, the paper had been using notebooks that are traditionally favored by graphic designers and photographers, but they were ready for a change.

»**CHALLENGE** Strengthen IT infrastructure by replacing unstable notebook computers, standardizing the data center to manage departmental needs, and implementing a storage and backup solution to handle massive file archives

»**SOLUTION** Deploy 400 desktop computers ranging from the Dell™ OptiPlex™ GX110 to OptiPlex GX260, and Dell Latitude™ X200 notebook computers; Dell PowerEdge™ servers; and a storage area network (SAN) based on the Dell/EMC® FC4500 array and a Dell PowerVault™ 136T tape library for automated backup

»**BENEFIT** Greater PC reliability for journalists in the field; a cost-effective, high-performance data center in the newsroom; high storage capacity to manage file archives; and fast data retrieval



Customer Spotlight

“IF WE HAD UNDERTAKEN THE SERVER UPGRADES ON OUR OWN, THE PROJECT WOULD HAVE TAKEN US MORE THAN THREE MONTHS INSTEAD OF ONLY THREE WEEKS”

“When things went wrong, we were forced to send the hardware away to be repaired for months at a time,” Munteer says. “As a daily newspaper, we simply could not afford the PC downtime.”

Seeking more stable computers, the Detroit Free Press decided to replace its notebooks with Dell™ Latitude™ CS series notebooks. Munteer recalls that the switch to Dell was a tremendous success for the organization. “The performance and stability of Dell notebook computers help our correspondents file reports with speed and reliability,” Munteer says. The initial success of the switchover led to a purchase of Latitude X200 notebooks in 2002. Journalists have leveraged the wireless capabilities of these notebooks and used them to cover big news stories such as the 2002 Olympics and the 2003 war in Iraq.

“Since we switched to Dell notebook computers, we have had virtually no hardware problems,” Munteer says. “Moreover, when we do need repairs, Dell comes to our organization to fix the problems. Our computers are back up and running in no time.” The paper also took this opportunity to upgrade some of its desktops

with Dell OptiPlex™ GX110, GX240, and GX260 computers.

Budget restraints call for a cost-effective data center

At the same time, the organization spurred a search for more affordable servers to meet budget limitations. After evaluating its options, the Detroit Free Press ultimately chose Dell PowerEdge™ servers to act as domain controllers and departmental file-and-print servers. Today, approximately 80 percent of the servers in the data center carry the Dell brand.

Not only did the organization save on the acquisition costs of its servers, but A.J. Hartley, newsroom technology director at the Detroit Free Press, says his team also was able to use the Dell Web site for fast and easy ordering. “The ease of purchasing directly from the Dell Web site was something that we did not find anywhere else. It enabled us to configure our own servers to fit within our budget, and we didn’t have to involve a middleman.”

The Dell PowerEdge servers have helped the newspaper increase system availability, performance, and fault tolerance. Many of

these servers also play a key role in helping the newspaper with its daily reporting tasks. For example, one server runs an application that brings in wire service feeds such as the Associated Press and Reuters, and then automatically builds the newspaper’s daily sports statistic pages.

Dell helps the Detroit Free Press find the perfect shot

The Detroit Free Press relies on photos, files, and footage to create compelling content. The newspaper collects and stores hundreds of thousands of multimedia files ranging from PDFs and JPEGs to wave files and video, and these files sometimes are needed long after they are created. For that reason, the Detroit Free Press required a storage solution that could house large volumes of data and enable fast file retrieval.

The newspaper implemented a SAN based on a Dell/EMC® FC4500 storage array connected to two Intel® Xeon™ processor-based Dell PowerEdge 2650 servers and a Dell PowerVault™ 136T tape library for backup. The SAN houses the organization’s SQL databases, which store



different data files and enable access to the newspaper's archives, including a digital photo archive that contains photographs spanning the last 10 years. "Without the SAN, we would not have been able to do a front-page feature to celebrate the 100th birthday of the Ford Motor Company," Munteer says. "Thanks to the high performance of the SAN, we were able to search instantaneously across 10 years of archives to find the best images. Before the SAN, we would have had to scan each database individually to perform this search." Additionally, replacing the newspaper's direct attach storage devices with the Dell PowerVault 136T tape library has simplified backups because the staff no longer needs to manually change backup tapes on individual drives.

Implementations are a snap with Dell Professional Services

Dell Professional Services (DPS) has helped the Detroit Free Press revamp its IT infrastructure virtually every step of the way.

The newspaper relied on the project management services of DPS to help with the imaging of approximately 300 PCs. In the server room, the Detroit Free Press engaged DPS to assist with an installation of Microsoft® Active Directory® services that was accomplished in just two weeks, and an upgrade from Microsoft Exchange Server 5.0 to Exchange Server 2000 that was completed within one week. Most recently, DPS helped the newspaper implement its SAN, and DPS continues to assist the newspaper with firmware updates and maintenance. "For example, our SAN automatically notifies Dell when it experiences certain technical problems," Munteer says. "DPS then responds immediately to make sure that the SAN is running properly."

Although the newspaper rarely uses technology consultants, Hartley and his team believe the DPS engagements were an exception—and well worth the time saved. "DPS helped us get started in the right direction and gave us a solid foundation,"

Hartley says. "If we had undertaken the server upgrades on our own, the project would have taken us more than three months instead of only three weeks."

Since deploying Dell hardware for its PC, server, and storage needs, the Detroit Free Press has enjoyed an IT infrastructure that offers higher performance and more stability at a reduced acquisition cost. "Dell has enabled us to dramatically change our data center," Munteer says. "We are now able to do more sophisticated things with technology in an economical way."

As the Detroit Free Press considers its future technology needs, the organization plans to leverage the Gigabit Ethernet¹ capabilities of its Dell servers to increase the speed and bandwidth of its network. "When we have a big news day around here, we push the limits of our IT infrastructure," Hartley says. "Dell helps us ensure that we are always ready to handle this type of situation, because that is when our readers are counting on us the most." **D**



¹ This term does not connote an actual operating speed of 1 Gbps. For high-speed transmission, connection to a Gigabit Ethernet server and network infrastructure is required.