Precisely the right solution

By implementing Oracle and Linux on Intel Xeon processor MP-based Dell servers—plus a Dell|EMC SAN—Precision Response Corporation is expected to reduce IT costs through less expensive maintenance, simpler management, enhanced performance, and improved scalability

Since 1982, many Fortune 500® companies have outsourced their sales support, call-center services, e-mail management, and fulfillment needs to Precision Response Corporation (PRC). As such, every new client that PRC gains actually represents thousands of new customers added to its customer database.

For years, PRC had been running the UNIX® operating system on proprietary servers to store customer information and manage call-center operations. As business began to grow, so did the costs required to maintain such a complex environment. PRC sought a more flexible hardware platform that would improve infrastructure scalability and availability—while reducing the costs of acquisition and ongoing maintenance. In addition, PRC wanted to find a suitable hardware platform for its existing Oracle® customer database and minimize the training required to migrate to a new operating system.

When PRC recognized the power and affordability of Intel® Xeon™ processor MP–based servers running Oracle and the Linux® operating system, the answer was clear: A migration from complex, proprietary systems to standards-based hardware held the potential for significant cost savings without sacrificing high performance. That decision led PRC to Dell.

PRC finds strength in numbers

According to Bill Hicks, senior vice president of technology and CIO of PRC, the company's mammoth customer database forms the backbone of its business, and PRC needed servers that could keep pace with its clients' needs. "An Oracle9*i*™ Real Application Clusters (RAC) database manages every bit of customer information we have for each of our clients," Hicks says. "We chose Dell™ servers with the Intel Xeon processor MP because our clients rely on our ability to gain

real-time access to their customer information, and our database needs to run on equipment that offers exceptional performance and reliability."

Furthermore, Hicks says that Dell hardware is well suited to the high-availability clustering environment on which the company relies. "Not only does clustering protect our data by ensuring no single point of failure, but it also allows us to grow as we need. At the same time, the flexibility of Dell hardware allows us to buy as we need," Hicks says.

Dell and Linux fortify a wall of security

PRC's databases contain sensitive customer and financial information, and securing company access to this information is a mission-critical task for the IT staff. To ensure the strongest protection of customer information, the IT team needed a reliable firewall. As its databases grew, PRC wanted to maintain a high level of security, but find more cost-effective hardware on which to run the firewall infrastructure.

PRC moved from its proprietary UNIX-based firewall servers to standards-based Dell PowerEdge™ servers running the Red Hat® Linux operating system. Hicks says the benefits have been obvious. "Since we migrated our firewall environment to a Dell, Intel, and Linux solution, we have reduced our support and administrative costs and experienced greater stability and exceptional throughput," Hicks says. "In addition, the transition of our firewall servers from the UNIX operating system to the Linux operating system is translating into minimal support costs because our staff is already familiar with open-standards systems. That in-house knowledge enables us to accomplish our own technical support and repairs faster."

PRC targets reduced storage maintenance costs with a SAN

Not only did the company's data traffic increase as it gained more clients, but PRC also found itself in need of a place to store all of that rapidly growing data. PRC had been using a variety of direct attach storage servers that proved expensive to maintain—not to mention inefficient in their method of data storage. Again, PRC turned to Dell—this time, to deploy a Dell|EMC CX600 storage area network (SAN) to support the company's growing data more efficiently by pooling shared storage resources.

Since the SAN implementation, PRC has benefited from a more reliable IT infrastructure at a reduced cost. "The Dell SAN has enabled PRC to dramatically reduce our IT acquisition and management costs," Hicks says. "Previously, we were buying separate storage servers to solve our growing client needs. That meant we had to buy new storage servers much too frequently and that we could not make the most of our storage capacity. Our SAN supports our clustered environment and lets us grow more smoothly, cost-effectively, and according to our needs."

The proof is in the ROI

PRC prides itself on the tangible benefits of its IT implementations—any project that the company undertakes must achieve a solid return on investment (ROI) quickly. "We have clearly met our ROI goals with the Dell and Oracle9*i* RAC solution on Linux," Hicks says. "Part of the formula is the price/performance ratio of the Intel architecture. The Intel processors in our Dell servers power through our data fast enough that we can be very nimble when dealing with our clients' customers. And the best part is that the Intel architecture–based Dell servers perform this well at such an attractive price point."

As PRC grows, Hicks remains confident that the performance of the company's IT infrastructure will continue to benefit the company and its customers. "Since our Dell deployments, our clients have experienced massive improvements in performance and throughput, and we know that we have a secure place to store all of our critical data. We know that this implementation will continue to be a real win-win for everyone involved."

PRC

» **CHALLENGE** Accommodate rapidly growing customer base by improving performance and scalability of servers and storage; reduce IT acquisition and maintenance costs by migrating from proprietary hardware to standards-based hardware

» **SOLUTION** Deploy Intel® Xeon™ processor MP–based Dell™ PowerEdge™ servers and a Dell|EMC CX600 storage area network (SAN) running Oracle9*i*™ database with Real Application Clusters (RAC) on the Red Hat® Linux® Advanced Server operating system

» **BENEFIT** Projected cost savings of US$18,000 per month in IT maintenance costs, improved scalability, and increased performance

Customer Spotlight