



Baylis Logistics drops Unix and Windows to increase productivity

Baylis Logistics' legacy IT environment was based on a number of discrete networks at seven depot locations with hardware and software duplicated across the seven warehouse facilities. At each depot, Windows PCs were used by operations staff to access the browser-based and telnet applications.

When its aging Microsoft Windows and SCO Unix based IT infrastructure needed replacing, Baylis Logistics turned to LinuxIT and Red Hat to implement a new infrastructure based on a thin client architecture running Red Hat Enterprise Linux and centrally managed by Baylis Logistics' own IT support team.

Maintenance problems due to redundant desktop hardware

Baylis' IT infrastructure had comprised of separate, server-based networks at each of the seven sites. Each depot had one SCO Unix server delivering its core Distribution and Fleet management applications and providing an interface to the company's central MySQL database system, which was used to consolidate data from across the entire company.

By 2005, the network of over 200 Windows PCs was not only reaching the end of its life-span, but also exposing Baylis to very high maintenance costs and increasing risk of infection from viruses. With the PCs primarily used for browser-based and telnet applications, the majority of users had little requirement for the feature rich desktop environment of over-specified PC hardware.

Restoring the balance between user requirements and the cost of maintaining the network of servers and client devices was a priority for Baylis.

Consultancy and Support from LinuxIT – Red Hat Advanced Partner

Baylis invited IT systems provider and Red Hat Advanced Partner LinuxIT to perform a review of its IT infrastructure in light of the issues it had identified. One of the first companies to become a RedHat Advanced Partner, LinuxIT offers a complete end-to-end solution, augmenting its hardware and software solutions with the professional services capabilities required to deliver a fully integrated solution. As a UK training partner, LinuxIT is also able to provide post installation support and training for clients, which is supported by Red Hat.

fast facts

- **Industry**
Logistics / Distribution
- **Geography**
United Kingdom
- **Challenge**
Renew aging IT infrastructure based on Microsoft Windows desktops and SCO Unix servers across 7 remote locations with a more manageable solution with improved price/performance.
- **Solution**
Thin client architecture with graphics-based terminals connected to a central server hosting data, operating system and all applications.
- **Benefits**
 - Reduced management and maintenance time
 - Immediate cost savings due to combination of hardware choice and the nature of open source software in terms of licensing
 - Extended lifecycle of desktop client assets from three years to 10+ years
 - Increased security
 - Increased system performance and uptime

““

Just by switching to the new thin client architecture, we immediately saved £63,000.

““

““

The number of our IT support calls dropped to Zero.

““

““

We no longer need to stop all systems just to back-up our data.

““

The Solution

LinuxIT proposed the implementation of a 'thin client' architecture using the Red Hat Enterprise Linux operating system. All users' applications, data and even the operating system are hosted on central servers, with access provided by a network of thin client graphics-based terminals. Without any applications, data or conventional hardware pieces (hard-drive, disk-drive etc.) residing on the terminal, it is both physically and operationally 'thin'.

LinuxIT and Baylis selected HP hardware based on the powerful 64-bit architecture for the servers and a combination of HP and Wyse hardware for the thin client terminals. The 64-bit processors also enable the servers to achieve a better application performance.

Red Hat Enterprise Linux was recommended as the operating system for the software architecture, because it is highly customisable and much more cost-effective than available alternatives.

The core applications used by Baylis Logistics to run their business had already been migrated from SCO to Linux. These applications included logistics management, and customer electronic data interfaces were migrated to the new servers and accessed by the users at each depot via the browser-based interface.

The Benefits

"Just by switching to the new hardware architecture we immediately saved approximately £9000 at each location, as the thin terminals cost £150 each compared to around £500 for PCs running Windows. These are instant TCO savings before even going live," said David Kenning, IT Manager at Baylis Logistics.

"The other huge savings are of course the reduced number of licenses we had to purchase by going with Red Hat Enterprise Linux as each session run on the terminals boots from the server, so we only had to spend on the server operating system subscriptions," added Kenning.

Without any data residing on the user terminals, the system benefits both in terms of security and setup costs. Another advantage of this user-agnostic environment is that it frees staff from a fixed desk as they can have the same user experience at any terminal on to which they logon.

Baylis Logistics is now running two servers at each warehouse location, one running the Chess management software and the other hosting the thin client sessions. The servers have failover capability, as they can manage both tasks if one is offline. The servers host all data and processes for the thin client users, running applications such as terminal emulation, Open Office, web-mail and a browser for web based applications. The servers also connect to the central, Red Hat Enterprise Linux powered, MySQL database, which is accessible to both staff and clients through an Apache web server.

"Other benefits we are realising and expect to continue in the long run are the reduced resources we have to invest in maintenance, support and security because of the simple fact that Linux is more reliable and secure. This will have a major influence on our business continuity strategy. The combined thin client solution and Red Hat Enterprise Linux from LinuxIT has not only enabled us to make considerable savings on software licences, but also made staff more motivated and satisfied because their computer systems are just so much faster and more reliable. Our IT support calls from operational staff literally dropped to zero. What's more, the new failover server eliminates the need for tape back-up; we only reboot the server because we think it's safer to do so, not because we have to. Also, we no longer need to stop all systems just to back-up our data," commented Kenning. ■

UK-based Baylis Logistics is an established third-party distribution company operating a nationwide network of seven depots covering in total just under one million square feet of storage space. Baylis lorries move food, liquor and consumable goods to supermarkets across the country.

The company has experienced tremendous growth in recent years and currently has a turnover of exceeding £35million.



Building 3, Chiswick Park
566 Chiswick High Road
Chiswick
London, W4 5YA
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)20 8899 6138

Broad Quay House
Prince Street
Bristol BS1 4DJ
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)117 905 8718

The Old Rectory
High Street, Iron Acton
Bristol BS37 9UQ
United Kingdom
Tel: +44 (0)117 905 8718

www.linuxit.com