



Linux hits the headlines: better performance and high availability at St. Galler Tagblatt AG.

Biggest in Eastern Switzerland

St. Galler Tagblatt AG is the biggest media company in eastern Switzerland, and employs more than 650 people. Its biggest publication is the eponymous daily newspaper, which has a circulation of 108,000 copies. The public limited company also publishes several trade journals, customer newsletters and a weekly newspaper. St. Galler Tagblatt AG has a close strategic partnership with its major shareholder, Neue Zürcher Zeitung (NZZ), which has enabled St. Galler Tagblatt to realign its IT systems in a more cost-effective and efficient way.

Strategic realignment of IT

In 2003, the IT managers of the two companies, Peter Baer and Rolf Brun, developed a plan to split tasks between the computer centres in St. Gallen and Zurich according to operating system. Up to then, each computer centre had hosted its own applications, with SAP applications in Zurich and St. Gallen running on UNIX®. Consolidation according to operating system would generate considerable synergy. The two companies' Windows®-based applications would run at the Zurich computer centre, while all the SAP systems would be based in St. Gallen. It was also agreed to use Linux® on

Intel® as the joint operating system: Linux offers an attractive price/performance ratio, being an open source system it is future-proof and protects investments, and the use of 64-bit technology makes it extremely powerful.

SAP – the 'nervous system' of the company

St. Galler Tagblatt AG expects the use of Linux to result in a cost- and performance-optimized operating environment for its SAP applications, which are not only used in the core areas of finance, controlling, asset management and human resources, but also in almost every other area as well. Advertisement management and sales are handled with the SAP media industry solution, and SAP software is also used for address and subscriber management, billing of shipping charges, collection and accounting for various subsidiaries. "We regard SAP as a strategic partner to our company," explains Erich Giesinger, infrastructure and hardware manager at St. Galler Tagblatt AG. "We will be converting all our operational business processes to SAP software in the medium term."

Overview

■ The Challenge

To set up a powerful, cost-effective operating environment for SAP systems which achieves high availability for applications and servers.

■ The Solution

- Industry:* Media
- Applications:* SAP R/3 4.6C, SAP for Media industry solution
- Software:* SuSE Linux, SteelEye LifeKeeper for Linux
- Hardware:* IBM @server xSeries 455
- Services:* CC Computersysteme und Kommunikationstechnik GmbH.

■ The Benefits

Open, low-cost system landscape, optimum protection against system failures, much faster data preparation, faster online processes – a modern, economic platform with room for growth.

Return to IBM – on 64-bit high-performance computers!

St. Galler Tagblatt AG has used IBM servers in the past and has always been very happy with their performance, stability and reliability. The decision to use IBM **@server** xSeries 455 was therefore a logical one. But this was not the only reason: this platform also sets standards in the 4- to 16-way server market with its high-performance Enterprise X-Architecture with XpandOnDemand processors, and enables high scalability of input and output procedures. Because of its Open Source benefits, SuSE Linux Enterprise Server 8 (the 64-bit version) was chosen as the operating system and MaxDB as the database solution.

Building a new infrastructure

Four IBM **@server** xSeries model 455 servers were ordered from IBM Business Partner Bechtle Data AG in April 2004. Two of these servers host St. Galler Tagblatt AG's SAP applications, one in production and the other as a test and development environment. The other two servers house NZZ's SAP applications in the same configuration; these are operated remotely from Zurich. A high-performance server backbone network linking the computer centers in St. Gallen and Zurich and the two companies' printing departments was created for this purpose. IBM Business Partner TDS Multivision AG was responsible for integrating the servers into the existing IT infrastructure and implementing the operating system, the database solution and the SAP system. The Bechtle Data AG team worked fast and professionally, and assisted with the SAN integration at St. Gallen, meeting tight deadlines. Interface configuration, testing and migration started in mid-May, and NZZ's SAP applications on Linux have been in production since early July 2004. The Go Live date at St. Galler Tagblatt AG was not until October, so there was time to implement another efficient high-availability solution.

At least as important for SAP as performance: high availability

Every second the system is unavailable costs money. A reliable, high-availability solution is therefore anything but a luxury. LifeKeeper for Linux from SteelEye Technology Inc., an IBM and SAP technology partner, proved ideal for the new system environment. This cluster software can coordinate up to 32 computers and has certified kits for managing, controlling and protecting a large number of applications. Computer Concept CC, Computersysteme und Kommunikationstechnik GmbH from Dresden, another IBM Business Partner, handled the implementation. CC operates the SteelEye Competence and Support Center, Central Region and Eastern Europe, and works closely with IBM's Linux specialists. "We like to use xSeries in cost-cutting programs. Combined with Linux solutions, they are a perfect basis for reducing the TCO," explains Dr. Mira Stranz, CC.

Fit for the future

At the beginning of October 2004, the IBM **@server** xSeries model 455 servers and the SAP applications running on Linux and MaxDB at St. Galler Tagblatt AG were combined into a cluster using LifeKeeper. The cluster's testing and development server will take over the functions of the production server in case of a failure. In the company's day-to-day business, the power of the new SAP system implementation on the IBM **@server** xSeries model 455 server can be felt by all users. Erich Giesinger explains: "Address data are now prepared three times faster than before, and our Internet-based processes have also become a lot faster. The users are finding the new system very easy to use, and it also allows us sufficient leeway for future growth – one of our central concerns."

"We wanted to run our SAP systems on Linux. IBM offered us a sophisticated Linux strategy – and we're benefiting from it!"

Peter Baer,
Head of IT at St. Galler Tagblatt AG



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D-70548 Stuttgart
ibm.com/solutions/sap

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SAP AG
Neurottstraße 16
D-69190 Walldorf

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