



RED HAT ENTERPRISE LINUX DELIVERS CLASS ACT FOR THE VICTORIA UNIVERSITY OF WELLINGTON

FAST FACTS

Industry	Higher Education
Geography	New Zealand
Business Challenge	Replacing end-of-life proprietary system with a stable and reliable platform that would facilitate lower-cost hardware and ongoing savings on platform maintenance
Migration Path	From Sun Solaris SPARC to Red Hat Enterprise Linux on Intel Xeon Processor-based Dell servers
Software	Red Hat Enterprise Linux 4, Banner (student administration application by Sungard Higher Education)
Hardware	4 x Dell 2850 servers with Intel Xeon processors
Benefits	Reduced annual maintenance fees, realized cost savings of 75 percent related to hardware, increased application performance, improved security, stability, and reliability



BACKGROUND

Situated in the 25,000-strong community of Victoria, for over a century the Victoria University of Wellington has developed a tradition of strong international links in teaching and research, and programmes of national significance and international quality.

With more than 21,380 students and some 2,000 full time staff, the University is committed to providing students with opportunities to acquire, understand, and apply disciplinary and interdisciplinary knowledge, as well as related skills and attitudes, and to enhance their personal development.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

For five years, the Victoria University of Wellington had been successfully running its student administration system, including its primary Banner software application, on a Sun Solaris platform. However, as the infrastructure hardware approached its 'end of life,' system administrators were becoming concerned about the ongoing operating costs of the existing system, and the hardware replacement costs that were imminent.

According to Andrew Matthews, Applications Development and Support manager for Central Student Administration, Victoria University of Wellington, as the University approached the replacement phase of the hardware lifecycle, it began to seriously investigate alternative options.

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**-Andrew Matthews,
Victoria University of Wellington**

“We were conscious of the high costs associated with the ongoing maintenance of our Sun Solaris platform, and like any organisation, we were keen to reduce expenditure on new hardware,” said Matthews.

“In the interest of finding a viable solution and with enterprise-ready open source solutions available, for the first time we really opened our eyes to possibilities beyond the proprietary world,” he said.

The Victoria University of Wellington was also looking for a solution that would enable it to build more redundancy into the system without requiring additional physical boxes, which were simply too expensive.



SOLUTION

The University's selection process initially focussed on the replacement of the expensive proprietary hardware, and once a decision was made to standardise on the server infrastructure on commodity based servers from Dell. The strong relationship between Dell and Red Hat led the university to evaluate and deploy Red Hat Enterprise Linux for its critical applications.

In 2002, the University began the process of migrating its student administration systems from Sun Solaris to Red Hat Enterprise Linux. The new platform enabled the University to save money by standardising on four Dell 2850 servers, which run the Banner student administration system and a number of bespoke internal applications that the University developed for its enrolment management systems.

"Red Hat Enterprise Linux was the obvious choice when it came to finding a platform that would meet our requirements for immediate hardware savings and long-term maintenance savings," said Matthews.

"We knew that Red Hat Enterprise Linux could support our core Banner application, but we were also impressed by Red Hat's security credentials, given that our system handles a high volume of student records and we have strict auditing guidelines, and it had a proven track record when it came to its support capabilities."

With the initial migration complete, the University will continue to extend Red Hat Enterprise Linux to a further 13 Dell 1850 application and web servers as they approach end of life in 2010.

BENEFITS

Since putting Red Hat Enterprise Linux into production at the University, Matthews and his team have recognised a number of benefits across the board.

The Victoria University of Wellington's move to Red Hat Enterprise Linux running on Dell servers has saved the University more than NZ\$16,000 (approx. USD\$10,330) per annum in support costs for student administration systems, alone.

"In addition to the support costs savings year-on-year, we estimate that we saved approximately 75 per cent in upfront hardware costs," said Matthews.

With these substantial cost savings, the University could also afford to implement the redundancy system it had hoped to create.

Additionally, in the long term the University has peace of mind when it comes to future hardware replacement cycles. With hardware typically becoming redundant every five years, the University can now realistically afford to manage this ideal lifecycle span.

The performance of the Red Hat Enterprise Linux platform has also impressed the University.

"Our previous Solaris system delivered a high standard of performance, so when it came to evaluating our new platform the bar was set quite high. We're very pleased that the Red Hat Enterprise Linux platform has more than proven itself on the performance front," said Matthews.

"A solid and reliable operating system is like a silent partner it's a critical supporting layer of the IT infrastructure that should just do its job without any hiccups or complaints. As a manager of a number of systems, I am very comfortable with how our Red Hat Enterprise Linux platform runs because it performs well and isn't a burden on me or the University in any way," said Matthews.

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