

Guitar maker cuts system maintenance
by 50 percent with HP servers and storage



"HP and Cordicade IT contributed significantly to the successful implementation of our ERP solution. Their expertise, product reliability, flexible financing and service support helped us put C. F. Martin in a more competitive position." — Cindy McAllister, Director of Information Systems, C. F. Martin & Co. Inc.



Challenge

- Convert Enterprise Resource Planning infrastructure to a Microsoft Windows environment to ensure continued use and support of MAPICS Syteline ERP software
- Migrate more than 250 gigabytes of data to new servers
- Improve processing speed and system stability
- Stay within capital expenditures budget

Solution

- HP ProLiant DL760 servers, each with 8 processors, 4 internal hard disks, 10 GB RAM
- HP ProLiant DL380 server, with 2 processors, 2 internal hard disks, 2 GB RAM
- HP MSA1000 Disk Array with 24 146 GB drives
- HP StorageWorks software (Secure Path, Insight Manager, Array Configuration Utility)
- HP StorageWorks MSL5026S2 tape library
- MAPICS Syteline 6.01.10 (Version 7.03 after final phase of project)
- HP Services (24x7, 4-hour response, on-site coverage for 3 years)

Results

- Reduced maintenance time by 50 percent
- Increased system stability due to redundancy capabilities of ProLiant servers
- Improved processing speed
- Improved productivity throughout the organization
- More time to focus on IS projects
- Reduction in cost of ownership due to pricing and leasing options available through HP Financial Services

Director of Information Systems Cindy McAllister knows that C. F. Martin & Co.'s ability to improve business processes is as critical to its success as its ability to create superior quality guitars.

For that reason, McAllister recently enhanced the firm's infrastructure by replacing UNIX-based servers with powerful HP ProLiant servers. The HP servers host, operate and secure C. F. Martin's Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system, which synchs with business processes throughout the company.

Established in 1833, C. F. Martin is known throughout the world as producer of superior quality guitars and strings. Located in Nazareth, Pennsylvania, the company produces acoustic guitars for well-known performers such as Eric Clapton, Paul Simon, Jimmy Buffett and John Mayer.

A software-driven change

In March 2003, McAllister discovered that the next generation of MAPICS Syteline, the ERP software C. F. Martin uses, would no longer operate on a UNIX operating system. That, coupled with the ending of C. F. Martin's current equipment lease, led her to launch a project to replace the company's UNIX-based hardware with servers that could run the Microsoft Windows® operating system.

C. F. Martin wanted a supplier that could load the servers with Microsoft Windows, network management software and security software before delivery and also document server configurations. "We wanted to save our staff's time and expertise for the Syteline installation and data conversion," notes McAllister.

In one weekend, the C. F. Martin IS staff planned to convert 50 gigabytes of Syteline ERP data from one operating system to another, reload the Syteline software,

recompile thousands of custom programs, test the system and iron out any inconsistencies they might find. They also had to migrate 200 gigabytes of network data files to the new servers. They could not tolerate any surprises. The hardware had to be reliable, and they wanted assistance from a local consultant who understood and could meet their requirements.



In 2004, C. F. Martin produced its one-millionth guitar (shown here). On January 28, 2005, the company donated a Veterans' guitar (model DVM) to "The President's Own" United States Marine Band.

Local expertise counts

"This project was a very large capital investment, so we had to get at least four comparable quotes," notes McAllister. "We selected the HP solution because of price, performance and the fact that HP recommended a local reseller, Cordicate Information Technology, who could offer expert advice and help with the installation. The other suppliers just wanted to sell us hardware and software and expected us to find someone to help with installation."

The entire ERP database platform resides on one ProLiant DL760 server. A second ProLiant DL760 serves as a back-up if the primary server fails and is also used for file serving. A ProLiant DL380 server, running Veritas NetBackup software, manages backups to an HP StorageWorks tape library and will be the development server as the IS team customizes the Syteline 7 application over the next 24 months. An HP StorageWorks Modular Smart Array 1000 handles online data storage, and all three servers are equipped with HP StorageWorks software to protect valuable data and ensure system stability.

"HP Financial Services makes it easy to keep up with new technology," says McAllister. "We decided to lease because it's cost-efficient and it helps us get the productivity benefits that come with refreshing our equipment every three years." Meanwhile, a three-year Care Pack services package helps keep total ownership cost within budget and protects the company's IT investment.

Cordicate IT and HP worked together to create a configuration that would fit C. F. Martin's ERP requirements for the next three years. Cordicate IT also installed the servers, operating systems and the Veritas backup and management software. They also made recommendations regarding the Syteline installation.

HP makes C. F. Martin more competitive

Each of the ProLiant DL760 servers has eight Intel® Xeon™ processors, enabling C. F. Martin to cut the time required for end-of-night batch processing in half. Background queue processing is also much faster, making users more productive. "One job that used to take an hour now takes less than five minutes," reports McAllister.

C. F. Martin employees spend less time worrying about technology and more time focusing on business because the HP solution has significantly increased the ERP system

stability. Switching to Windows allowed C. F. Martin's IS staff to upgrade and patch its Progress database software, resolving some serious problems. Previously, Senior Network Administrator Chris Mohler had to restart the database services once a week. Now the database services can run a month at a time without being restarted.

The increased number of hard disks and the Veritas back-up software have further improved stability, as has HP StorageWorks Secure Path software, which automatically secures and maintains the connection with the servers.

HP innovations have automated the way the IT staff manages technology, saving hours of technician time. Previously, when a disk failed, technicians spent an hour or more getting the system back on line and another 10 hours rebuilding the disk's mirror image. Now, with the MSA 1000, they simply remove the old disk, put in a new one and everything else is automatic.

"All the pieces in the solution work well together, and that puts C. F. Martin in a position to be more competitive," Mohler says. "Not only does it make us more efficient, but it gives us enough power to implement extranet projects that will make it easier for our customers and suppliers to do business with us."

A beneficial relationship

McAllister's staff recently received recognition for substantially improving productivity when C. F. Martin's Continuous Improvement Program Committee honored them with a gold-level award for the project.

Now, the IS staff will undertake a 24-month project to upgrade their ERP system to SyteLine 7. They anticipate a smooth reimplementation with continued support from HP. Thanks to an HP system that eliminates maintenance chores, they have the time to focus on the upgrade.

"HP and Cordicate IT worked side by side with the C. F. Martin Information Systems staff," says McAllister. "From scoping our needs through project completion, they helped us get it done within budget."

At a glance

Company: C. F. Martin & Co. Inc.

U.S. headquarters: Nazareth, Pennsylvania

Founded: 1833

Employees: 850

Telephone: 610.759.2837

URL: www.martinguitar.com

Primary business: Manufacturing and sales of quality acoustic guitars and strings .

Partner at a glance

Company: Cordicate Information Technology

U.S. headquarters: Bryn Mawr, Pennsylvania

Telephone: 610.527.9520

URL: www.cordicate.com

Primary business: IT infrastructure solutions provider.

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