



IBM Netfinity servers and Linux solution gets vote of confidence from Mexico's IFE



Overview

■ **The Challenge**

Establish realtime intranet communications throughout Mexico to share information and improve communications between 335 district voting offices during national elections

■ **The Solution**

Deployed 335 IBM Netfinity® 3000 servers running a LINUX™ operating system, supported by IBM services

■ **The Benefit**

Improved reliability and sped up election results for Mexico's 50 million registered voters

Election managers from Mexico's 335 voting districts manually counted the ballots and sent the vote tallies to election headquarters in Mexico City by e-mail. Not surprisingly, this process was slow by the latest election standards, e-mails got lost, and initial voter counts were often considered unreliable.

All that changed for the mid-summer 2000 elections. Instituto Federal Electoral (IFE)—the organizing body that manages voter registration and the election process—created a nationwide intranet comprised of powerful Intel processor-based servers from IBM running the RedHat Linux operating system. The new system counts the votes electronically and the results are relayed to election headquarters from each district via a faster, more secure intranet connection. Final election results are posted within hours on the IFE's Web site, also powered by an IBM server.

"IBM server technology, running the Linux operating system, helped to greatly improve communications between our voting districts and election headquarters. We now have an extremely fast intranet as our communication vehicle and ultimately a more accurate, better way to conduct national elections for over 50 million registered voters," says Juan Carlos Lopez, IFE's Project Director.

"Reliability, competitive price, and compatibility with the Linux operating system were key reasons why we choose the IBM Netfinity system to coordinate Mexico's election process."

*Juan Carlos Lopez
Project Director for
Instituto Federal Electoral*

Linux compatibility

When the IFE began their search for a more efficient way to handle the voting process, they wanted a robust, low-cost and scalable hardware platform to support shared file-and-print and intranet applications. Compatibility with Linux was important because the IFE was familiar with the open-source operating system running in its existing UNIX-based main-frame environment.

An IT consultant to IFE, Grupo Qualita — an IBM Business Partner located in Mexico City — recommended the Netfinity 3000 server platform. With fast Intel processors, Light Path Diagnostics™ and system management technologies built into the system, the Netfinity running Linux was a confident winner — at an affordable price. Certified to run Linux, the Netfinity servers function as both intranet servers using Apache software and as file-print and mail servers for application and information sharing across the multiple remote offices.

“Initially, we looked at two other major vendors, but the Netfinity 3000 stood out with its superior price and proven performance,” says Lopez. “The IFE also found the Netfinity server more reliable, secure and easier to configure with Linux than any competing system,” he adds.

IBM support

With help from IBM, the IFE created their national intranet by deploying the 335 IBM Intel®-based servers — one in each voting district. Because these voting districts — many located in remote regions of the country — often lacked technical personnel, the IFE staff produced an Apache and RedHat auto-install CD to easily configure the servers and routers for Linux.

Also playing a key role in supporting the intranet was the dedication and service from IBM. Servers were often installed in remote regions without air conditioning or constant power supplies. “But even in these rough conditions, the Netfinity servers proved to be extraordinarily reliable. We experienced very few failures, but whenever there was an issue, IBM was always quick to help, either with onsite support or by sending a replacement part,” says Lopez.

For more information

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