VEDES AG: an easy play – High availability for SAP with Linux on xSeries.

Overview

- **The Challenge**
  In the course of the expansion and release upgrade of the SAP implementation, a scalable, highly available, yet economical, server platform was sought. The operating system and database were also to be changed.

- **The Solution**
  Industry: Retail
  Application: SAP® R/3® Enterprise; SAP BW; SAP for Retail
  Software: SuSE Linux; Oracle®; Tivoli®; SteelEye LifeKeeper for Linux
  Hardware: IBM @server® xSeries®, IBM TotalStorage®
  Services: CC Computersysteme und Kommunikationstechnik GmbH

- **The Benefit**
  VEDES now operates a stable, secure and economic platform for business-critical applications, which supports future company growth.

The service center for the European toy industry.

The ship of the VEDES logo has become a trademark familiar to generations of parents and children. VEDES, founded in 1904 as an association of German specialized toy retailers, is today a modern service center and supports its members – specialized shops – in purchasing and logistics, in marketing and IT services. It has set up a central settlement bank to handle the bank-guaranteed delcredere (liability for recovery of a debt) for affiliated members. The central settlement turnover in 2002 was 427 million Euros. With about 950 employees, the VEDES Group represents approximately 1,150 members in Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Italy and the Benelux countries.

SAP creates conditions for expansion.

It's not easy for the toy industry right now. For the VEDES group, expansion on a Europe-wide basis is therefore the order of the day. VEDES sees the greatest potential in responding more quickly to market changes and reducing costs in purchasing and logistics. For this purpose, new concepts and the reorganization of the core processes are necessary. "So we decided to further expand our SAP solution", says Gerhard Schreyer, VEDES IT Manager in the toy metropolis of Nuremberg. "We need a uniform ERP system for central goods management. The previous platform was partly host-based and partly evolved as client/server architecture. Our numbers were not uniform or transparent."

Back to IBM with xSeries and Linux.

SAP R/3 had already been in use since 1998. In 2002, VEDES was looking for an ERP solution for the future and therefore evaluated three products – only to end up right back where it started, with SAP. In addition to finance and controlling applications, SAP for Retail and the SAP Business Information Warehouse (SAP BW) were to form the core of the new IT generation.

"Scalability, functionality, the certified standard interfaces and the future-proof perspective of SAP were decisive in this process", stresses Gerhard Schreyer. In connection with the release change to SAP R/3 Enterprise, even greater tasks were however on

the agenda. A completely new platform was introduced. "We already had an IBM host in the sixties, and therefore had positive experience of IBM", notes Gerhard Schreyer. "With the xSeries and its very favorable price-performance ratio, we have now returned to IBM. Linux was the first choice for us because we wanted a stable operating system in the xSeries environment, with which we could grow. And one which would allow us to run an IT solution at the lowest possible cost."

SteelEye LifeKeeper: high availability with Linux – an easy play.

As a medium-sized company, VEDES was looking for an economical, reliable and practical high availability solution for its business-critical applications. It found all these in LifeKeeper for Linux from SteelEye Technology Inc. The advantages: a modularly set up, application-oriented solution, scalable high availability of up to 32 nodes in one Linux cluster, certified application recovery kits for management, controlling and protection of many applications. Errors both in hardware and in applications are detected, and corrected where possible.

For the implementation, Schreyer was able to engage IBM Business Partner Computer Concept CC, Computersysteme und Kommunikationstechnik GmbH, in Dresden as a partner. CC acts as the SteelEye Competence and Support Center for the Central Region and for Eastern Europe, and thus also stands for availability of first level support. CC works closely with the Linux specialists in the IBM laboratory in Böblingen. "xSeries platforms are often preferred when it comes to consolidation processes and cost reduction programs", reports Dr. Mira Stranz from CC. "With the certified failover cluster solution, LifeKeeper, a very high degree of failsafe reliability

in the xSeries environment is possible at a low cost. Because our medium-sized customers have become very cost-conscious, Linux solutions represent an ideal basis for an IT environment with a particularly low TCO."

SAN Concept with FAStT and Tivoli.

The productive SAP cluster system for the approximately fifty registered VEDES users consists of two IBM @server xSeries 445, each with two Intel® Xeon® processors, an IBM ServeRAID™ adapter, 4 GB RAM and 36.4 GB on a RAID level 1 drive. The SAP test system was set up on an IBM @server xSeries 345. The external storage solution on the IBM TotalStorage SAN is an IBM TotalStorage FAStT 600 Storage Server with 14 x 73.4 GB, also certified for use in a LifeKeeper environment.

The operating system is SuSE Linux Enterprise Server 8. The SteelEye solution LifeKeeper for SAP on Linux takes care of the high availability. The planned SAP BW will also be implemented in a Linux environment using an Oracle database, with an x445 with four processors each for both the productive system and for the test and development system. In addition, there is an x345 as backup server, an IBM Ultrium tape library and a FAStT extension, also with 14 x 73.4 GB on the SAN. The system is completed by an IBM Tivoli security solution.
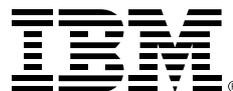
Complete restart – without having to reboot.

The move from SAP R/3 Release 3.1i to SAP R/3 Enterprise and the database migration from SQL Server under Microsoft® Windows NT® to Oracle 9 with Linux went smoothly. Following precise preparation of the system installation, cluster activation was achieved in only one working day.

The system will run to capacity with the productive operation of the SAP industry solution SAP for Retail, which is currently still being customized in the test environment. Schreyer's first experiences are positive: "Extremely stable! The server hasn't been touched once since putting it into operation. It doesn't have to be rebooted again and again. Our previous system wasn't even close to being so stable – or so reliable."

"Very impressive: high availability, certified products, implementation."

Gerhard Schreyer, IT Manager, VEDES AG, Nürnberg

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