

The Power to Focus on Clients, Not IT



The AMD Opteron™ processor helps a busy Midwestern U.S. law firm stay connected and prepare for the future

THE CHALLENGE

- Today's legal cases require more documentation than ever and secure access to that information anytime, anywhere
- The previous system, PC-based document storage and peer-to-peer networking, suffered from limited access and frequent lost connections
- Hardware failures routinely caused lost time and required expensive data recovery measures
- The existing system cost the firm thousands of dollars in maintenance and service calls every year

THE SOLUTION

- Implemented an AMD Opteron™ processor-based, IP, pedestal server
- Built by NOW Micro, an AMD Platinum Solution Provider partner
- Installed and supported by Apex Computer of Minnesota

THE IMPACT

- Provides attorneys and staff with seamless, remote access to critical client information and documents
- Reduces downtime due to lost connections and hardware failures, as well as lowers costs for support services and staff; firm expects to save up to \$2,000 a year on maintenance and service calls alone
- Enables a secure document repository, regular data backup, and remote service capability that helps protect the firm and its clients

The move from a peer-to-peer-based network to an AMD Opteron™ processor-based server solution allows the Metcalf, Kaspari, Howard, Engdahl & Lazarus, P.A. law firm to work more efficiently, reduce downtime, and plan for growth.

For Metcalf, Kaspari, Howard, Engdahl & Lazarus, P.A., a seven-employee law firm in Minneapolis, Minn., technology was the last thing in which the company wanted to invest. The attorneys in the firm, who primarily represent unions and working people, felt they had already spent too much on computer maintenance and service issues. With no centralized server, the attorneys and staff stored all their legal and billing documents on their individual PCs, making it difficult to share and access documents, run reports, or prepare invoices.

"We set up peer-to-peer networking between the attorneys' and the assistants' computers so that the assistants could pull information off the attorneys' machines for billing purposes," said David Shay, president of Apex Computer of Minnesota, a value-added reseller serving Minnesota and Wisconsin, and the law firm's IT service provider. "But peer-to-peer networking has a tendency to lose connection to other machines, which frustrated the firm. So when the attorneys and assistants needed to share files, they would have to use and manage multiple diskettes, rather than communicate seamlessly."

Another major concern was losing billable hours because the system was so inefficient. To make matters worse, the law firm didn't have a central backup, so if something happened to one of the computers, it required starting with the last manual backup and working forward in an attempt to recreate the data.

"One attorney's laptop hard drive crashed twice, and we had to retrieve the data to the tune of \$1,500 to \$1,600 each time," said Jan Fridgen, the firm's office manager. One time, the crash occurred at the end of the month, and the attorney had \$20,000 worth of billable time saved on her machine, so it was well worth it to pay for the retrieval. But the expense could have been avoided if the data had been saved onto a server and backed up automatically.

"If any of the attorneys had a problem with an individual computer, it required completely reinstalling and reconfiguring everything. Basically, we would have to start over," said Fridgen. "And it was the same scenario if anybody ever got a new computer. We would start over again."

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– Jan Fridgen, office manager, Metcalf, Kaspari, Howard, Engdahl & Lazarus, P.A.

After continuing to experience issues like these, the decision-makers in the firm began to see how an investment in a server would be worth the expense. After adding up the maintenance and service calls over the previous five or six years, they calculated that the firm had spent well over \$10,000 — more than the cost of the server solution a firm their size would need.

With an easy installation that required only a rolling shutdown for one day, the law office implemented an AMD Opteron processor-based, 1P, pedestal server. To build the solution, Apex worked with NOW Micro, an AMD Platinum Solution Provider partner.

“It was pretty much all set up for us. The systems from NOW Micro work straight out of the box. It was great,” said Shay. “All we had to do was drop in the server, start adding users, and run the basic server installation software. We breezed right through it.”

Enterprise functionality for small business

Taking the firm’s entire operation off individual machines and centralizing it on the server has made it more stable, according to Shay.

Often, when small businesses don’t have a centralized server or use a desktop as a server, they’re relying solely on desktop security, which can leave the business vulnerable. When they migrate to an AMD Opteron processor-based server, they are adding a level of security and functionality that puts them in a more manageable, reliable business situation in their IT. This basically allows smaller companies to build in enterprise functionality for a small business price.

With AMD’s award-winning Direct Connect Architecture and simultaneous 32- and 64-bit computing, small businesses can make a smart investment to increase performance now and still be ready when they want to make the move to 64-bit operating systems and applications. The same is true with AMD’s native multi-core processor design. As the whole industry moves to multiple cores and 64-bit computing, small businesses won’t be left behind.

Thanks to the performance, reliability, and manageability offered by the AMD Opteron processor, the server runs seamlessly in the background. “It’s behind the scenes and it’s doing everything that it’s supposed to do, which is what we always strive for,” said Shay.

The staff members have also noticed a decrease in the time it takes to run reports, partly because it’s easier to pull the data needed for reporting directly off the server, and partly because certain functions run faster thanks to faster processing. In fact, the firm reports that because of efficiencies they’ve realized with the new server, they have been able to refrain from replacing a staff member who left. The two remaining assistants decided that they could handle everything themselves.

“The AMD Opteron processor-based server solution has made each attorney and staff member happy,” said Fridgen. “Daily operations seem to be more seamless. We all have the access we need, and everyone is comfortable with the level of security.”

In addition to setting up passwords for secure areas vs. shared areas of the server, Apex installed a firewall and a watchdog for secure remote access to the server. With outside access to the network, Apex can log in to make changes, set up a new account, or monitor a backup without having to make a trip to the firm’s offices.

After the transition to the AMD Opteron processor-based server, the attorneys at Metcalf, Kaspari, Howard, Engdahl & Lazarus, P.A. now have the ability to do things they never could before, such as accessing confidential files on the server from the courtroom and taking advantage of centralized scheduling, timesheets, and billing.

The firm has invested in a solution that will continue to offer returns in more functionality, more automation, and more scalability — especially when the time is right to expand. Fridgen is confident that with the capabilities the server provides, the firm can continue to increase its efficiency, even as it takes on more clients and cases in the future. ■

About AMD

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