



AMD OPTERON™ PROCESSORS HELP BLUE CROSS OF NORTHERN PENNSYLVANIA BETTER CARE FOR CUSTOMERS AT A LOWER COST

"We were basically out of space in our data center but we still required additional servers to help us introduce new applications to better serve our customers and meet ongoing compliance standards. A VMware® virtualization solution with the Dual-Core AMD Opteron™ processor allowed us to nearly double our server images within the same physical space, providing the same if not better performance, without incurring high costs or increased energy consumption." — Jim Slick, manager, Network Services, Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania

Challenge

- Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania (BCNEPA) has a mission of constantly improving the level of service and lowering costs of health care for its 600,000 members.
- To continue delivering affordable in-demand services such as claims automation and maintain compliance with various government mandates such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA), the company required massive processing power that could also keep costs low.
- The company's data center was filled to capacity, hindering the company's ability to procure new servers to host these new applications.

Solution

- The company selected VMware® Infrastructure and Dual-Core AMD Opteron™ processor-powered HP ProLiant® DL585 servers.

Impact

- The Dual-Core AMD Opteron processor with Direct Connect Architecture helped BCNEPA realize the performance and optimization benefits of a virtualization solution.

- “We almost doubled our server images in the past year. We accomplished our goals in the same power envelope and the same space within our data center, eliminating the need to acquire costly new real estate,” said Jim Slick, manager, Network Services, BCNEPA. “We’re getting more performance but less heat with every Dual-Core AMD Opteron processor-based server.”

Organizational Profile

Blue Cross of Northeastern Pennsylvania (BCNEPA) has a mission of making health care easier in the communities it serves. It continually demonstrates that it is an advocate of better health through the establishment of relationships with health care providers that allow for broad access to new technologies and clinical services. It provides cutting-edge programs for improving the quality of care, with a goal of improved health outcomes. BCNEPA also provides support in the management of chronic disease and educates its customers through innovative materials and programs that emphasize preventive care.

The company strives to simplify the complex world of health care through the coordination of care, a choice of affordable plans, and ease of administration. It constantly evaluates and refines its business processes to gain greater efficiencies and create unparalleled customer satisfaction. BCNEPA is committed to improving its communities through the support of creative initiatives that improve health and the quality of life; it is particularly drawn to the social and physical needs of families and children.

For more information about BCNEPA, visit www.bcnepa.com

Challenge

With more than 600,000 members in 13 counties, BCNEPA is constantly improving health care via new technologies and services. In addition to rolling out new services for its customers, the company was also required to achieve compliance with various standards set forth by the government such as the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA). However, the company’s data center was filled to capacity, which hindered the company’s ability to procure new servers to meet these goals. “We were simply out of space,” said Jim Slick, manager, Network Services, BCNEPA. “We needed a solution that could fulfill our performance and capacity

requirements without needing to purchase costly, additional space for a new data center.”

Also part of BCNEPA’s goal is making health care more affordable. One means of accomplishing this goal is the identification and implementation of cost-efficient solutions throughout its operations, establishing cost savings which BCNEPA can then pass along to its customers. With rising energy costs, BCNEPA also made power consumption an important decision consideration.

Slick and his team began exploring virtualization — the ability to improve IT efficiency by running multiple operating systems simultaneously on fewer servers —as a potential solution to these challenges.

Solution

The company selected VMware® Infrastructure, the most widely deployed software suite for optimizing and managing industry-standard IT environments through virtualization, with Dual-Core AMD Opteron™ processor-powered HP ProLiant® DL585 servers. “A virtualized environment is ideal for low or inconsistent system usage, such as seasonal applications, and IT environments where space is limited,” said Slick. “But it is the implementation of the Dual-Core AMD Opteron processor that sets us apart from other virtualized environments. With AMD64 technology, we have established a dense, robust, affordable virtualized solution that delivers high performance and excellent flexibility without increasing our power and cooling bills.”

The virtualization solution replaced numerous large and expensive application servers to more efficiently run powerful applications such as CoNexus, a new application that allows groups and members to check coverage details online. The solution also supports internal functions that fluctuate in usage such as print servers.

Impact

With its Dual-Core AMD Opteron processor-based virtualization solution, BCNEPA “almost doubled our server images in the past year. We accomplished our goals in the same power envelope and the same space within our data center, eliminating the need to acquire costly new real estate,” said Slick. “We’re getting more performance but less heat with every Dual-Core AMD Opteron processor-based server.”



The new Dual-Core AMD Opteron processor-based solution also surpassed the company's performance expectations. "CoNexus is a powerful application run by an equally powerful database, Microsoft® SQL Server — both of which require significant horsepower. Thanks to the Dual-Core AMD Opteron processor, we launched CoNexus with excellent results," said Slick. "We were expecting the system to support 150 simultaneous users but we have been able to support more than 200 customers at once. This performance has allowed us to ensure excellent availability for our customers while eliminating the need to purchase additional costly hardware to support customer demand for the application."

Due to the exceptional power and flexibility of the AMD solution, BCNEPA is moving all of its development applications to the new systems. The power and speed of the virtualized system has radically reduced deployment time, which cuts costs across the board. "Our Dual-Core AMD Opteron processor-based virtualized environment has reduced total cost of ownership (TCO). Where physical servers require days and sometimes weeks to prepare, we can dynamically transfer applications among our virtualized servers in less than 20 minutes. This eliminates the need to purchase, manage, upgrade and power new servers for the same scenario," said Slick. "This helps us realize massive costs savings per server, which we then pass along to customers."

"We have been so impressed with the Dual-Core AMD Opteron processor that we have converted 75 percent of our x86 servers in our data center to the technology," Slick added. "We plan to almost entirely complete that conversion by the end of the year."

The company is also testing 64-bit applications and has seen impressive initial results. "The performance of applications running on Microsoft Windows® on the Dual-Core AMD Opteron processor is an order of magnitude faster," said Slick. "We are eager to move forward with this performance upgrade."

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