



RED HAT HELPS STICHTING INTERAKT CONTOUR WITH EFFICIENT MAIL USAGE

FAST FACTS

Industry	Healthcare
Geography	Netherlands
Opportunity	In 2004, Stichting InteraktContour was faced the challenge of replacing its mail server. In particular, there was demand for a scheduler that could be efficiently shared and viewed from any location. The company compared the benefits of a Microsoft Exchange solution with those offered by Red Hat solutions.
Solution	Software: Red Hat Enterprise Linux 4 with Zarafa 4.23 Hardware: HP proliant DL 360 Intel servers
Benefits	In choosing Red Hat solutions over Microsoft Exchange, Stichting InteraktContour saved an initial 60,000 euros and will continue to save additional funds over time. With Microsoft solutions, the company would have increased its licensing and training costs substantially. With Red Hat solutions, TCO was greatly reduced. Stichting InteraktContour also enjoyed outstanding management features and connectivity between open source products including PHP/MySQL and its various existing databases. The company benefited from a simple and easily implemented solution with Red Hat too. Alternatively, with Microsoft solutions, the company's IT implementation was deemed very complex.



BACKGROUND

Stichting InteraktContour was created in 2004 as a result of a merger between Stichting Interakt and Stichting de Contour. It currently has approximately one thousand employees who provide care services to people with physical disabilities. In particular, persons suffering from non-congenital brain damage. The company's activities focus on three areas including daytime activities, home visits, and residential care. Although its customers are very diverse, each has the ability to lead an independent life despite their handicap—thanks to the proper care provided by InteraktContour. The organisation currently has approximately 1,500 customers who are in daily contact with their care attendants.

OPPORTUNITY

With approximately one thousand busy employees, Stichting InteraktContour's activities result in sizeable daily mail traffic. At the time of its challenge, the company's heavy mail traffic consequently resulted in an increasing need for mail facilities that could be shared and viewed from any location. In 2004, the foundation was using 12 servers including Citrix servers, various database servers, a small number of file servers, and Windows 2003 as the primary domain controller (PDC). Each server was managed from the company's headquarters in Hengelo, where its IT department is based. At other locations, the organisation used 10 file servers running Linux.

Halfway through 2004, Stichting InteraktContour's IT department noticed that its mail server running Windows 2000 was becoming exceedingly slow. The maximum

user limit that the server's processor could handle had been reached. It resulted in frequent delays in webmail traffic. Marien van den Hoorn, the systems administrator at InteraktContour, initially thought that increasing the computational power of the mail server would help, but soon realized it was merely a temporary solution. The IT department considered purchasing Microsoft Exchange because the suite could be integrated with Active Directory. It was thought that it would fit in well with the Windows environment already in place.

"Microsoft Exchange seemed the obvious choice for us," said Marien van den Hoorn. "But as the result of my previous positive experiences with Linux regarding file servers, I was interested in learning more about an open source solution involving mail server facilities. I checked and compared various Linux solutions via the web."

During the same period, the organisation was going through a merger with Stichting de Contour. As the number of mail users grew from 500 to 700, the mail requirements continued to increase. The IT department was faced with the choice between Microsoft Exchange and Red Hat Enterprise Linux. During the evaluation phase, aspects such as a stable and secure system, a low management workload, and low costs were high priority.

SOLUTION

After an evaluation of the Microsoft Exchange option, it quickly became clear that the total cost of the solution would be too high. Both the licensing costs and the costs involved in training the company's IT staff would increase substantially with Microsoft. And the implementation of the solution would require a major effort. The IT department also had doubts surrounding the success of a migration from its previous system to an Exchange environment.

Stichting InteraktContour searched for an open source equivalent of Microsoft Exchange. The company came across B&IT Netwerk that holds a Red Hat Certified Engineer (RHCE) certification. Van den Hoorn had already heard positive reviews of Red Hat Enterprise Linux and

the major benefits of the support offered for the solution. InteraktContour soon decided to implement Red Hat Enterprise Linux 4 on an HP Proliant DL 360 server with Zarafa 4.23 as its mail/scheduler suite.

"Prior to the implementation of Red Hat solutions, we exhaustively tested this option in Fedora Core 4 and everything worked like a dream," said Van den Hoorn. "Completely prepared for the implementation, we and B&IT were able to perform the migration to Red Hat Enterprise Linux 4/Zarafa 4.23 on a Saturday morning. For this purpose, all mailboxes had to be migrated from the existing server to the new server. There was to be no impact on user productivity and data loss was out of the question." Within a couple of hours, the migration had been completed flawlessly. On Monday morning, Stichting InteraktContour's mail system was up and functioning with enhanced capabilities.

BENEFITS

Red Hat and Zarafa have together provided successful solutions that have solved Stichting InteraktContour's challenges. The company experienced a significantly lowered TCO and flawless connectivity between its chosen open source products including PHP/MySQL and its various already existing databases.

"We managed to save 60,000 euros in purchasing costs alone," said Van den Hoorn, "If we had opted for Microsoft Exchange, the costs would have run up to 100,000 euros. With the Red Hat solution, the costs remained at a level of 40,000 euros." And that isn't the end of the cost savings. The TCO is spread across several years, equalling cost savings each time. Stichting InteraktContour also found Red Hat support to be extremely effective and affordable, whereas support for the Microsoft Exchange solution would have resulted in much higher costs.

According to Van den Hoorn, another major advantage of Red Hat Enterprise Linux is that fewer administrators are required for systems management. The structure of Red Hat Network is much simpler, more accessible, and man-



ageable. Thanks to its user-friendly web-based interface. After the migration the IT department noticed a strong improvement in server performance. It now needs less cooling and requires less computational power.

Van den Hoorn has no doubts about future expansions of Linux and Red Hat within Stichting InteraktContour. "I'm an adamant supporter of open-source solutions. If Stichting InteraktContour should require new servers in the future, Linux will be at the top of our list," he said.

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