hp success story

Equilibrium Technologies Inc.

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"HP showed us how to reduce our website costs by 50 percent or more. Our lease cost for three Sun systems equaled what we paid for eight HP ProLiant servers. I can deploy two HP ProLiant servers for the price of one Sun server — and nearly double the performance."

Information Services Manager, Greg Olson, Equilibrium Technologies, Inc.

image is everything for e-commerce company

Today's economy runs on images as much as words and data. Equilibrium Technologies commands a critical junction where images generated for one business context need to be reformatted and redeployed for another. For example, in this age of multinational mergers and acquisitions, consider the post-merger task of reapplying the correct logo across an enterprise.

Equilibrium's flagship product, the MediaRich Image Server, squarely addresses this need by automating production and deployment of visual content to streamline workflow and reduce costs.

"We focus on what challenges enterprises need to solve today, which is updating, manipulating and delivering their images for print, web, multimedia and global brand management," explains Equilibrium's Marketing VP Tim Bigoness.

Founded in 1989, Equilibrium soon gained industry leadership with its Debabelizer desktop automation tool for batch processing of graphics. As that market matured and the Internet boomed, the company decided to expand its offering to the enterprise level.

Equilibrium's Senior Marketing Manager Mathew Loewengart recalls, "About three years ago we went back to ground level to redesign our product as MediaRich technology, which we offered as a hosted service." Equilibrium built a big data center, which integrated its website as a front-end for customers to interact with their application service provider (ASP) offering. "We decided after several months that it was not a viable market for us," continues Loewengart, "and we were left with a large, unwieldy site — built on UNIX® hardware — which required multiple engineers and web developers to maintain."

waking from the update nightmare

Similarly, Equilibrium found itself hampered by the same unwieldy systems which prevented the firm from capturing new market opportunities. "Whenever the marketing department wanted to make simple changes to the website, such as adding a press release, it took several days," says Loewengart. "If we requested any changes, the homegrown system was so fragile that other components would break. Our platform was hardly a basis for e-commerce."

The company revisited the entire website to determine how best to communicate to its constituents and promote its indirect sales strategy — leveraging business partners, system integrators and VARs to offer MediaRich through their active customer relationships. "We had to eliminate the bottleneck," explains Loewengart, "so we emerged with three goals: to educate and demonstrate what MediaRich can do for customers, to recruit and support our partners, and to enable our subject-matter experts to contribute content directly to the website."

business needs dictate picture-perfect platform change

As their website deliberations evolved, Equilibrium partnered with HP to develop an e-commerce solution. HP brought together best-of-breed technologies to match Equilibrium's individual needs,

summary:

Equilibrium Technologies Inc., located in San Rafael, California, helps businesses automate image management and delivery. The company recently implemented a comprehensive computing solution to extend its market reach and greatly empower content publishers on the equilibrium.com and Equilibrium Partnernet websites. "By re-architecting our site with HP and Microsoft® solutions, including HP ProLiant servers, we've enabled business managers to easily update content in minutes."

enabling the company to create a successful e-business platform. HP supplied the hardware platform, Microsoft furnished the e-business software and Equilibrium provided the imaging component for the solution.

"Microsoft already had their solutions for Internet business (MSIB), which suited us perfectly," says Bigoness. "Also, we wanted to use and test this e-commerce platform ourselves before trying to bring it to market. That meant we had to satisfy our concerns about performance, agility, configuration ease and budgetary constraints by moving our web infrastructure to the Microsoft Windows® platform running on HP ProLiant servers. We had to take back control of our website."

Equilibrium needed a best-in-class site that fit the size of its business in terms of staffing, finances and responsiveness in a changing market. "What we wanted," continues Bigoness, "was a true integration of our own MediaRich software to drive the imaging capabilities, Microsoft Content Management Server and Commerce Server to handle content and list management, and high-performance HP ProLiant servers to run everything."

Loewengart raises another key consideration regarding Equilibrium's need to promote its channel relationships. "We aligned with HP and Microsoft to advance our channels strategy and extend our market reach into the enterprise. With these two close strategic partners, we leverage their world-class solutions expertise and technology along with their worldwide sales and marketing ecosystem. Our technology partners help us attain leadership in our particular market and solidly differentiate our e-business offerings by bringing tangible solutions to market quickly."

from design to live in record time

Equilibrium and HP outlined a sweeping plan to move from the UNIX operating environment to the maintainable Microsoft Windows platform. "We prefer HP because we work well together," notes Bigoness. "Beyond guiding us to the exact hardware configurations, the knowledgeable HP team made suggestions in areas we had overlooked — such as redundancy and backup — to optimize our overall web server performance."

With further assistance from Magenic Technologies and others, the Equilibrium team built a new corporate Internet site and partner extranet with robust content-management capability in less than three months. The comprehensive solution takes advantage of the strengths of all the partners, including the MediaRich image server operating with MSIB components, along with Veritas Net Backup and an HP StorageWorks DLT tape library — all running on ProLiant servers (six model DL360 servers and one model DL380 server).

HP installation of the systems infrastructure was a snap, thanks to industry-leading HP ProLiant servers, which are built on open standards, equipped with automated provisioning and deployed in pretested configurations. "I installed Windows and everything else using HP SmartStart installation software, which substantially reduced the provisioning and setup time." Olson continues to use SmartStart from his computer desktop to update all the drivers in the new environment. This includes a quality assurance testing environment built on 16 ProLiant DL380 servers.

business results:

- dynamic publishing capabilities extend Equilibrium market reach and leadership
- Equilibrium realized enormous cost savings by liberating engineers from system maintenance
- Equilibrium gains faster time to market with new offerings and updates
- operational costs reduced by 50%
- uptime of 99.9 percent ensures uninterrupted e-commerce availability

what makes it work:

hardware:
- 23 HP ProLiant model DL360 and DL380 servers
- HP StorageWorks DLT tape library

software:
- HP SmartStart
- Microsoft Windows 2000 Advanced Server
- Microsoft solutions for Internet business (MSIB)
  - Microsoft Application Center
  - Microsoft Commerce Server
  - Microsoft Content Management Server
  - Microsoft Internet Security & Acceleration Server
  - Microsoft SQL Server Enterprise Edition
- Veritas Net Backup

comprehensive solution brings products to market faster

Contemporary business is often more about knowledge transfer in areas that serve real business needs than it is about products; this is where the new solution proved its worth. "HP showed us how to reduce our website costs by 50 percent or more," reports Olson.

Unlike before, performance is not even an issue now. "We project that we can scale to run any website in the world with what we have in our data center," continues Olson. "We are serving 24 million images per day for ubid.com — the world's second largest auction site — and that's using only four HP ProLiant servers."

Beyond dramatic price-performance upgrades, operations also improved exponentially. "Integrating everybody on the same platform eliminated 90 percent of the problems," says Olson, "while accelerating content-management changes from hours or days to minutes. Every day gives us a tangible return on our investment, because the people responsible make their content changes themselves."

"We've gained sizeable cost benefits," adds Bigoness. "Equally important, we use this as our key sales tool to show our enhanced e-commerce capabilities and as our voice to the outside world. Time to market is just as critical as cost reduction for many businesses. Our winning HP platform serves us tremendously well, while enabling our customers to compete more effectively."

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