Accelerating Development Cycles and Enabling Rapid Business Growth

To meet increasing client demands for customization, Pfortner wanted to accelerate its development cycle. By adopting SUSE Studio™ to build and modify its secure connectivity appliances, Pfortner has reduced development time by a massive 60 percent, accelerating the delivery of new functionality to its clients and boosting operational efficiency.

Overview

Based in Centurion, South Africa, Pfortner provides network perimeter security solutions as well as network encryption appliances. The company is focused on the financial services sector, for which it delivers secure end-to-end connectivity solutions. Pfortner is rapidly expanding its business throughout Africa, Europe and South America, working closely with technology partners.

Challenge

As a provider of secure connectivity solutions and network appliances to the financial services sector, which does not tend to buy off-the-shelf software, Pfortner undertakes significant customization work for its clients. As the company looked to expand into new markets, it wanted to accelerate the development cycle and enable new developers to become productive sooner. Equally, Pfortner wanted to serve its clients better by responding faster to requests for customization.

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ALLAN SWANEPOEL
Systems Developer
Pfortner

"We lacked a comprehensive software lifecycle management tool, which made it difficult to split work effectively across teams of developers," said Aubrey Swanepoel, Managing Director of Pfortner. "As a result, each developer tended to be responsible for the full stack of management and support for their own product. This slowed down the development cycle and prevented them from focusing fully on their core competence."

By creating a more structured development environment, Pfortner knew that it could accelerate delivery, improve internal efficiency and bring on new team members more rapidly.

Solution

Pfortner became one of the first companies in South Africa to adopt SUSE Studio, a powerful yet intuitive tool from SUSE for building software appliances based on SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server.

SUSE Studio offers Pfortner a web-based graphical environment for building and adapting software appliances. Developers can choose an existing base platform or build their own custom kernel, add or remove standard Linux software from any compatible repository, add their own custom-built software, set up networking security and users, then package the complete appliance ready for deployment by clients.

SUSE Business Partner:

PFORTNER

- **Name of Company**
  Pfortner

- **Industry and Location**
  IT services and solutions, South Africa

- **Products and Services**
  SUSE Appliance Program
  SUSE Studio
  SUSE Linux Enterprise Server

- **Results**
  + *Cut software development time by 60 percent*
  + *Simplified and accelerated training process for new developers*
  + *Achieved competitive advantage through faster time-to-market*

"In the past, it was difficult for us to respond as rapidly as we wanted to new requests from clients," said Systems Developer Allan Swanepoel. "With SUSE Studio, we have a well controlled set of base templates with the tools to rapidly customize, test and deliver new appliances. It's like having jet engines when we previously just had propellers! The demand for customization is enormous in the financial sector, so the ability SUSE Studio gives us to deploy completely new appliances in one or two days is a huge competitive advantage."

In addition to enabling the rapid creation and complete customization of Linux-based appliances, SUSE Studio simplifies lifecycle management, enabling developers to focus fully on core development tasks.

"SUSE Studio gives us a controlled and structured development environment in which it's much easier to collaborate," said Allan Swanepoel. "Our developers are happy because everything is much better organized, so they can really focus on their core tasks rather than having to spread themselves thinly across multiple different requirements."

SUSE Studio helps Pfortner to mitigate risk and accelerate the development cycle by enabling the company to test-drive appliances before deployment. The company can take in requests for new functionality from clients, build and test a revised appliance, then release it back to the client within just two days.

"Whether we're addressing standard vulnerabilities in software packages or delivering new front-end functionality, SUSE Studio allows us to do it rapidly and to a very high standard of quality," said Aubrey Swanepoel.

Results

Adopting SUSE Studio enabled Pfortner to quickly create a controlled environment for the rapid development, testing and release of new software appliances based on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server.

"We found joining the SUSE Appliance Program from SUSE to be a really smooth and efficient process," said Aubrey Swanepoel. "By day 12 of the implementation process, we were ready for development work. The excellent support from the highly professional local SUSE team was a major benefit."

Pfortner has cut the average development time for appliances by 60 percent, enabling faster and more cost-effective response to software patches and client requests for new functionality.

"With SUSE Studio, it's like we're using the same amount of fuel but driving twice as far," said Allan Swanepoel. "The leap in our productivity has been extraordinary, and the commercial model is great, too, having very low up-front costs."

With a controlled development environment that eases the pressure on developers, Pfortner can now focus on its strategic expansion plans. SUSE Studio makes it much easier to bring on new developers quickly and reduces training costs. Equally, the solution enables Pfortner to tap into the SUSE worldwide knowledge-base.

"For us, the two key benefits of SUSE Studio are that it brings consistency and stability to software development, and that it enables us to leverage open source technology to the maximum," said Aubrey Swanepoel. "SUSE provides extensive support and documentation around Linux, which helps us to build robust appliances for our clients."

Contact your local SUSE Solutions Provider, or call SUSE at:

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