



Success Story

Server

INSERM

By standardizing on SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server as its reference architecture for Linux, French national research agency INSERM has gained a stable, cost-effective and high-performance platform for vital administrative systems. The addition of SUSE Manager is helping the organization to respond faster and more efficiently when system updates and patches are released, boosting security while cutting the time and effort spent on administration.

Overview

Founded in 1964, the French National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM) is a public scientific and technological institute, operating under the joint authority of the French Ministry of Health and the French Ministry of Research. Just over 5,000 permanent INSERM staff work alongside a total of 8,000 contract staff, university hospital personnel and foreign researchers.

Challenge

INSERM is a large and complex organization with 318 separate research units across 10 thematic institutes, and an annual budget of almost €1 billion. To manage all of its biomedical research projects, the organization runs a mix of in-house and commercial administrative systems. Since the early 2000s, the majority of these servers have been based on Linux, as Julio Martins, Infrastructure Manager at INSERM, explained: “We migrated most of our infrastructure from Windows or IBM

AIX to Linux—primarily for increased stability, and also to avoid dependence on a single vendor.”

The key challenge within this administrative infrastructure at INSERM is to ensure continuing high levels of availability, performance, cost-efficiency and ease of management. When Red Hat—INSERM’s chosen provider for the majority of servers in the Linux estate—changed its pricing policy, the organization decided to standardize on a different distribution that would offer the same technical characteristics but at more favourable pricing.

Solution

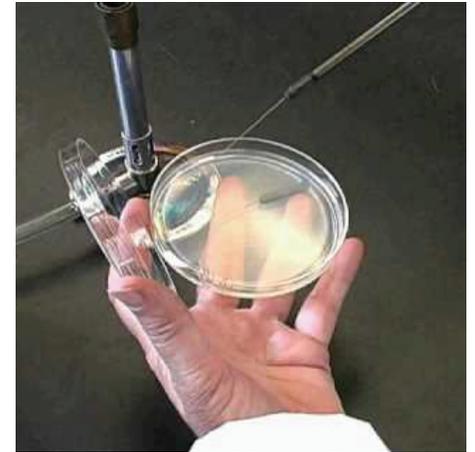
Based on its experience with the platform, and on SUSE’s commercially favorable offer to provide support for the remaining Red Hat Enterprise Linux servers in its estate, INSERM chose to make SUSE Linux Enterprise Server its reference architecture for new servers. Today, the SUSE OS accounts for 90 percent of all new server deployments, and more than half of the total Linux estate.

Guillaume Stevens, Systems Engineering Manager at INSERM, said, “We found that SUSE Linux Enterprise Server offered not only lower pricing but also the same or better performance and stability than Red Hat Enterprise Linux. As both operating systems use RPM for package management, migrating to SUSE was easy.”

“SUSE Manager gives us better visibility and control over updates and patches—above all, for critical security patches.”

JULIO MARTINS

Infrastructure Manager
INSERM



INSERM at a Glance:

The French National Institute of Health and Medical Research (INSERM) is a public scientific and technological institute responsible for strategically important biomedical research.

■ Industry and Location

Education/Government—Federal, France

■ Product and Services

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server
SUSE Linux Enterprise High Availability
Extension
SUSE Manager

■ Results

- + Standardized on a smaller number of Linux distributions for reduced TCO
- + Ensured continuing high levels of availability and performance
- + Gained new clarity and reduced time to patch servers

“We found that the packaging and availability of SUSE’s server-clustering technology in SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 11 were technically superior to those of Red Hat (RHEL5).”

GUILLAUME STEVENS

Systems Engineering Manager
INSERM

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INSERM has migrated practically every remaining system from IBM AIX to Linux—with the majority now running on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server—but retains Windows for around 20 percent of its infrastructure, typically to run applications for which the vendor does not support Linux. Almost all of the organization’s key administrative systems—accounts, procurement, billing and HR, as well as messaging and document management—now run on Linux.

The Linux landscape at INSERM is largely virtualized, with 60 percent being VMware virtual servers and 40 percent dedicated physical servers. Where systems require especially high levels of availability, the organization uses the SUSE Linux Enterprise High Availability Extension for clustering.

“We found that the packaging and availability of SUSE’s server-clustering technology in SUSE Linux Enterprise Server 11 were technically superior to those of Red Hat (RHEL5)”, said Guillaume Stevens. “This is one of the reasons that SUSE Linux Enterprise Server is now our reference architecture for Linux systems.”

To simplify the management of its Linux estate—in particular, for handling patches and updates—INSERM recently deployed SUSE Manager and is continuing to roll out the solution across all of its Linux servers.

Results

As INSERM continues to introduce new servers based on SUSE Linux Enterprise

Server, and to migrate existing Red Hat servers, it benefits from a product that is either equal or superior in technical terms and that offers more favorable pricing.

“In general terms, cost is not the only reason for standardizing on Linux—it is also about stability and security,” said Guillaume Stevens. “SUSE Linux Enterprise Server provides a stable platform for important administrative systems, backed by a highly professional support organization.”

Although still early in its implementation, INSERM is already saving time and effort by using SUSE Manager to control software updates and patches. For each major application, the organization typically has separate test/development, pre-production and production environments. SUSE Manager makes it easy to apply changes across an entire environment in one go, reducing delays and saving time for application administrators.

“SUSE Manager gives us better visibility and control over updates and patches—above all, for critical security patches,” said Julio Martins. “The solution gives us a clear view of system status and helps us to be more responsive to new critical patching requirements. This means that we can take a much more organized and structured approach, and deliver a better service to the application owners.”



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