Jiangsu Province Rural Credit Co-operative Union

Jiangsu Province Rural Credit Co-operative Union (JPRCCU) consolidated thousands of SCO UNIX servers located across 2,000 branches to a smaller number of SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server systems running in county data centers. This helped to reduce server numbers by 90 percent and costs by 60 percent while improving reliability and availability.

Overview
JPRCCU was founded in 2001 as a pilot for reform in China’s rural credit cooperatives. Based in Nanjing, the Union provides credit and banking services for rural corporations across Jiangsu Province, and operates 31 banks. As of December 2008, it has nearly 50 million customers, 478.5 billion Yuan (US$70 billion) in deposits and 344.6 billion Yuan (US$50 billion) in loans.

Challenge
With more than 3,000 computers across 2,000 branches in Jiangsu Province, all needing to connect to central banking systems, JPRCCU’s IT infrastructure was complex and difficult to manage.

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Vice Manager of Operation Maintenance Department, Information and Clearance Center, Jiangsu Province Rural Credit Co-operative Union

Solution
The IT department designed a new architecture: thin-client terminals in each branch would link to front-end servers in county data centers, which would in turn link to the central banking systems. The

Results
+ Consolidated thousands of computers, reducing hardware needs by 90 percent
+ Reduced hardware and software licensing costs by 60 percent
+ Simplified maintenance by centralizing IT infrastructure in fewer data centers
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organization chose Intel processor-based servers from IBM and HP, then evaluated operating systems.

“We decided a Linux operating system would be the right choice in terms of security, reliability, cost-efficiency and compatibility with the hardware,” said Mr. Chen. “We tested both SUSE Linux Enterprise Server and Red Hat Enterprise Linux, and decided on the SUSE option. We felt that SUSE provided better training resources and technical support, which was vital because we needed to train almost 500 IT staff to help us perform this large-scale implementation.”

The IT team completed the implementation in less than three months, and it has been live for more than nine months without problems. Consolidating onto the new front-end servers has reduced the number of machines that JPRCCU needs to manage by approximately 90 percent, as each of the new servers can handle requests from more than 100 user terminals simultaneously. The Union now has three to four front-end servers in each county data center, which can be managed easily by the small local IT teams.

“The SUSE technical helpline has been very useful, both during the implementation and for ongoing support,” said Mr. Chen. “When one of our local IT teams has a question about SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, they can get an expert answer almost immediately. This level of service puts SUSE well ahead of most other software vendors in China.”

Results
Centralizing and consolidating the IT infrastructure has reduced JPRCCU’s IT costs by approximately 60 percent, as a result of the reduction in the number of servers required and the more cost-effective SUSE Linux Enterprise Server operating system.

In addition, since there are now only a few servers per county, instead of tens or hundreds of unreliable PCs at individual branches, the maintenance and support costs have fallen dramatically.

“The overwhelming advantage of the new architecture is that it practically eliminates the need for IT staff to travel to individual branches,” said Mr. Chen. “If a thin-client terminal fails, staff at the branch can just swap it for a new machine—there is no need for specialist IT expertise. Moreover, with the servers located at the county data centers, our IT teams are able to fix them immediately if something goes wrong.”

This also translates to a better customer experience. Since faults can be fixed more quickly, individual branches enjoy higher levels of availability—helping them provide more reliable and continuous service to customers. Equally, since the new infrastructure is more flexible, it is easier to set up new branches and support the growth of the business.

“Choosing SUSE Linux Enterprise Server has had a positive effect on both the day-to-day operation of our branches and the long-term development of our business,” said Mr. Chen. “Centralization of IT infrastructure is becoming a trend in the Chinese banking sector, and it is important for us to lead the way in terms of modernizing the industry.”