Kiabi

To build greater flexibility into its IT environment, major French fashion retailer Kiabi chose to migrate key business systems to SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server. The move has doubled performance for a number of critical Oracle databases, and helped cut time-to-market for new services from weeks to hours.

Overview
French company Kiabi is a privately held clothing retailer with 450 stores across France, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Russia, Morocco, the Netherlands, and China. Offering fashionable clothing at low prices has helped Kiabi to thrive and grow; the company has annual revenues of approximately €1.3 billion and employs 7,500 people.

Challenge
Kiabi runs its core business applications on a centralized infrastructure across two data centers. In the past, the majority of servers ran Sun Solaris, while the most business-critical applications—including warehouse management, logistics and stock replenishment software—ran on clustered IBM AIX servers for optimal performance and resilience.

Hervé Pouille, UNIX Technical Manager at Kiabi, said, “We were almost completely a UNIX shop, with our other key technologies being Oracle database, Apache and Java. When Oracle bought Sun, and consequently Java and MySQL, it was immediately obvious that we had too many eggs in one basket. Kiabi was not comfortable with this level of dependence on a single vendor, which triggered our decision to migrate as soon as possible to a new platform.”

Solution
Kiabi had already deployed Linux for some back-end Apache services, and had run a major exercise to validate the open source platform for more critical environments. “We had migrated our CUPS environment to SUSE Linux Enterprise Server three years before, with excellent results,” said H. Pouille. “This environment now covers 3,000 printers in the stores and warehouses, printing on average two documents per second, and the reliability provided by SUSE Linux Enterprise Server has always been very impressive.”

The IT team performed further tests to validate Oracle on Linux, and saw that Linux would also offer performance advantages for systems running on Solaris and AIX. When the acquisition of Sun by Oracle triggered the migration decision, SUSE Linux Enterprise Server was the obvious choice.

Kiabi migrated more than 100 Solaris servers to SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, supporting mostly Tomcat application servers and Oracle database farms, and has since...
“The ease of management offered by SUSE Linux Enterprise Server is a major advantage. Virtualizing on VMware is very simple, and tools such as YaST and AutoYaST make it fast and easy to set up new servers for the business.”

HERVÉ POUILLE
UNIX Technical Manager
Kiabi

Kiabi has measured a doubling of performance for some critical Oracle database environments running on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server versus IBM AIX. Combined with significant cost reductions on the hardware side, it is no surprise that the preferred platform for all new deployments at Kiabi is SUSE Linux Enterprise Server.

“We are part-way through a TCO study for Linux on Intel, and already we can see that migrating our logistics infrastructure alone will deliver more than 30 percent savings in operational IT costs,” said H. Pouille. “Equally, the simplification in provisioning and managing servers has freed up skilled staff to focus on quality of service for the business.”

Hervé Pouille is quick to note that open source is not a synonym for free; the cost savings enabled by Linux stem less from licensing and more from reduced management effort.

“Our strong relationship with SUSE and the support from their technical team is vital,” he added. “With other distributions, we don’t get the same sense of all-round support and integration. Another major benefit is all the tools bundled with SUSE Linux Enterprise Server, which help to make it a flexible and highly economical platform for business services in a large retail environment.”