Macau Government Portal for Civil Servants

By building its portal services with open source components running on SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server, Macau gained a stable, flexible, low-cost platform offering excellent performance. The solution—designed and implemented with assistance from SUSE Technical Services℠—delivers information to civil servants and allows them to interact with one another.

Overview

Macau is one of the Special Administrative Regions of the People's Republic of China. A Portuguese administrative region until 1999, it occupies an area of 11 square miles on the south coast of China and has a population of 520,000. Macau is now a major tourist destination with booming convention and gambling industries.

Challenge

Macau SAFP is the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau in Macau, a government agency that studies, coordinates and offers technical guidance to improve the civil servants' management policies. They also work to modernize and reform public administration. The organization's eGovernment (eGov) team wanted to create an interactive portal for all civil servants that they could later extend to the public. The team found that its existing software platforms lacked the necessary flexibility and interoperability.

Working with closed source software made it difficult for eGov to link portal services to the existing infrastructure, including user directories and databases. This did not fit eGov's strategic commitment to openness and independence for its IT services. It also threatened to hinder future development of the portal. In particular, eGov wanted the flexibility to add new services or groups of users rapidly, and its existing software tools would not support this at low cost.

Solution

Macau's eGov team considered a solution based on proprietary technologies, but rejected it in favor of a set of open source components running on SUSE Linux Enterprise Server. The team designed, developed and rolled out the solution with help from SUSE Technical Services. The solution is built largely on the "LAMP" solution stack: Linux, Apache, MySQL and PHP.

"We felt that SUSE would offer stronger support than many other companies, and that SUSE Linux Enterprise would allow easier integration with our NetIQ® eDirectory™ solution," said Gabriel Santos, Senior Technical Consultant.

The new portal is a platform for disseminating information and hosting discussions among civil servants. All new legislation is published immediately to the portal,

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GABRIEL SANTOS
Senior Technical Consultant
Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau

Macau Government Portal for Civil Servants at a glance:
Macau SAFP is the Public Administration and Civil Service Bureau in Macau, China, which works to improve civil servants' management policies and reform public administration.

■ **Industry and Location**
   Government, Macau, China

■ **Products and Services**
   SUSE Linux Enterprise Server
   SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop

■ **Results**
+ *Gained stable, responsive and flexible platform for portal services*
+ *Diverted expenditure from software licensing into staff training*
+ *Increased efficiency and speed of access to information*

which also holds a full catalog of all government services. In the past, each service had its own website, and users would spend significant amounts of time hunting for information. As well as being able to find information more easily, civil servants can now post documents and questions in virtual meeting rooms, helping each other solve problems quickly and efficiently.

"The portal unites a number of information sources in a single, central resource that is fully integrated with our user directory," said Santos. "In the seven months since go-live, around 15,000 users signed up, contributing a total of 100,000 messages."

The move to open source software was driven primarily by cost considerations: eGov wanted to move its investment from software licensing to IT staff training. Simultaneously, the adoption of open source has made the organization less dependent on any single vendor.

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Macau's eGov team plans to introduce NetIQ Identity Manager to support a new extranet covering multiple government agencies. The organization already uses SUSE Linux Enterprise Desktop, and will promote its adoption across these agencies.

Results

By selecting open source technologies for its new portal services, eGov gained a secure, flexible and low-cost platform to promote the free exchange of information. The solution is stable and easy to administer, and the flexibility of components such as Apache Tomcat and SUSE Linux Enterprise Server has accelerated the development of new services.

"Other government agencies have difficulty integrating their closed source components, and of course the cost is very high," said Santos. "By contrast, the LAMP approach with SUSE Linux Enterprise gives us flexibility and easy development, at much lower cost."

With a shorter time-to-market for new services, the solution will help eGov keep the portal relevant to internal users.

"SUSE Linux Enterprise offers a stable environment that is easy to tune to our changing requirements," said Santos. "We achieved a fast rollout of the portal thanks to expert help from SUSE Technical Services. Many other vendors have a tendency to vanish once the sale is complete; with SUSE, the after-sales service is excellent, which gives us confidence that the solution will continue to serve our needs in the future."

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