



Success Story

Big Data

UCS Solutions

As retailers seek deeper, real-time insight into their operations, IT service providers need to raise their game. To give its clients access to high-velocity analytics, UCS Solutions has built a high-performance, multi-tenanted architecture for SAP HANA, based on IBM Power servers running SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications. The new architecture accelerates query speeds by up to 600 percent, and reduces storage requirements by 90 percent.



Overview

UCS Solutions is South Africa's premier provider of business process and IT-related service to companies that operate within the Retail Value Chain. Since 1998, the company's core business has been focused on the provision of SAP-oriented services to large and medium size retail businesses in South Africa, the Middle East and the United Kingdom.

Challenge

Technology in the retail industry moves fast. Maintaining competitive advantage increasingly depends on retailers being able to collect, analyze and act on data in real time, and use analytics to optimize operations and gain a deeper understanding of customer behavior.

For many leading South African retailers, much of the data needed to fuel these analyses is stored in SAP systems hosted

“With the SUSE Linux Enterprise platform and SAP HANA, we’re seeing performance improvements of up to 600 percent for some reporting processes.”

MORNE VAN RENSBURG

Executive of Technical Services Cloud Operations
UCS Solutions

by UCS Solutions. To enable its clients to analyze SAP data in real time, UCS decided to invest in SAP HANA technology. However, its initial HANA offering—built on x86 appliances—did not provide the multi-tenanted architecture necessary to support multiple clients on a single physical infrastructure.

Morne van Rensburg, Executive of Technical Services Cloud Operations at UCS Solutions, said: “Without the ability to create a multi-tenanted architecture, there was no way for us to achieve the economies of scale necessary to deliver SAP HANA as an affordable service for customers who don’t want a dedicated HANA appliance. We had to find a better way to operate.”

Solution

UCS decided to complement its existing appliance-based SAP HANA offerings by introducing a new multi-tenanted infrastructure for SAP HANA, based on IBM Power Systems servers running SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications.

“We visited the SAP headquarters in Wall-dorf and had some great meetings with SAP, IBM and SUSE,” said van Rensburg. “They demonstrated how the SUSE Linux Enterprise platform is tuned and optimized for SAP, and we were impressed by the close relationship and collaboration between all three companies.”



UCS Solutions at a Glance:

UCS Solutions is a leading provider of SAP-oriented IT hosting and managed services to the retail industry. The company provides these services to retailers in South Africa, the Middle East and the United Kingdom.

■ Industry and Location

Computer Services, Johannesburg, South Africa

■ Products and Services

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications
SAP HANA on IBM Power Systems

■ Results

- + Increased performance for some analyses by up to 600 percent
- + Accelerated one set of complex SAP processes from 14 hours to 7
- + Reduced storage requirements by 90 percent

“Our technical team appreciate the technical advantages of a Linux distribution that is specifically tuned and packaged for SAP. As a result, we’re planning to migrate most of our existing Linux environments to the SUSE Linux Enterprise platform in the near future.”

MORNE VAN RENSBURG

*Executive of Technical Services Cloud Operations
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As the only operating system certified to run SAP HANA on Power Systems, SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications offered UCS exactly what it needed. By giving UCS access to the advanced virtualization capabilities of the IBM POWER8 hardware, the operating system makes it possible to create a pool of virtual hardware resources that can be shared flexibly between multiple SAP HANA instances, with logical separation to ensure that each client’s environment is completely secure and stable.

We already have three clients up and running with the SUSE Linux Enterprise platform for SAP HANA,” said van Rensburg. “We’ve been able to package up the solution into a software-as-a-service offering that is very flexible and attractive for our clients.”

He adds: “Ever since our technical team began using SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications, they have become big advocates. They appreciate the close relationship between SUSE and SAP, and the technical advantages of a Linux distribution that is specifically tuned and packaged for SAP. We’re now planning to migrate most of our existing Red Hat Enterprise Linux environments to the SUSE Linux Enterprise platform in the near future.”

Results

With the new architecture in place, UCS is helping its clients transform their analytics capabilities.

“Our clients want a reliable, cost-efficient and secure SAP environment that offers high performance for the kinds of analyses that are crucial in today’s retail industry,” said van Rensburg. “Our multi-tenanted SUSE Linux Enterprise platform for SAP HANA gives us the final piece of the puzzle: we can now give them the real-time analytics capabilities they need, via a flexible commercial model that minimizes cost and risk.”

The combination of SAPHANA, SUSE Linux Enterprise Server for SAP Applications and IBM POWER8 technologies is already delivering impressive performance improvements for SAP analytics queries.

“In one case, across 13 complex SAP process chains, there was an overall performance improvement of almost exactly 200 percent—the runtime was cut from nearly 14 hours to less than seven,” said van Rensburg. “One of those processes went from 290 minutes to just 46 minutes, which is more than 600 percent faster. And the data compression capabilities make a massive difference too—we’ve seen a 90 percent reduction in storage requirements, compared to holding the data in a traditional database.

“Working with SUSE has been great from both the technical and the business perspective. As our clients look to expand their SAP environments, it is great to know that we have SUSE’s expertise in our corner.”



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