



Success Story

Financial Services

Western & Southern Financial Group

Western & Southern Financial Group (Western & Southern) needed to replace an outdated caching solution in the branch offices of one of its insurance subsidiaries, Western & Southern Life. The company implemented SUSE® Linux Enterprise Server for 25 percent of the cost of a proprietary caching solution, and increased caching speed in branch offices by 50 percent.



Overview

A Fortune 500 company, Western & Southern provides life insurance, annuities, mutual funds and investment management through one or more of its member companies. The company is one of the 10 highest rated life insurance groups in the world according to Standard & Poor's, and has assets owned, managed and under care in excess of \$48 billion.

Challenge

Western & Southern Life has high demands for shared bandwidth and large software downloads to its 2100 Field Sales associates spread across 180+ locations. The company evaluates prospective agents with online testing in 180+ offices in 22 states.

With bandwidth at a premium in the busy offices, the company relied on an appliance

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TOM FRENETTE

*Manager of Open Systems Infrastructure
Western & Southern Financial Group*

caching solution to offer fast Internet browsing for each office, including access to testing applications. With the particular appliance solution reaching end of life, the company needed a new solution to provide branch offices with fast Internet browsing and easy access to testing applications.

Solution

Western & Southern Life evaluated several caching solutions, as well as SUSE Linux Enterprise Server and Microsoft Windows, to determine the best server platform for its offices. After completing a head-to-head comparison, the company selected SUSE Linux Enterprise Server.

“When it came down to core components, SUSE Linux Enterprise had better caching capabilities than Microsoft Windows,” said Tom Frenette, manager of Open Systems Infrastructure at Western & Southern Financial Group. “We also had a lot of experience with Novell and felt it in our best interest to stay with a familiar vendor. We had a great experience with Novell associates who really knew how to get the most out of the product.”

Western & Southern Life implemented SUSE Linux Enterprise Server on 180+ low-end HP servers in all of its field offices. CDW imaged all of the machines before sending them to each office where the clerical staff was able to install the servers out of the box.



**Western & Southern
Financial Group**

Western & Southern Financial Group at a glance:

Fortune 500 diversified financial services company

■ Industry and Location

Financial Services, United States

■ Product and Services

SUSE Linux Enterprise Server
Xen virtualization
Novell ZENworks Linux Management

■ Results

- + *Implemented Linux servers in each branch office for 25 percent of the cost of a proprietary caching solution*
- + *Increased caching speed in branch offices by 50 percent*
- + *Reduced software costs with open source applications*

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SEAN KEPLINGER

Technical Analyst

Western & Southern Financial Group

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“Now we have a workstation in each office replicating what our caching solution used to do,” said Frenette. “While a desktop user browses the Internet, the machine is caching for the rest of the office.”

The company runs open source proxy software on each SUSE Linux Enterprise workstation to reduce bandwidth and improve response times by caching and reusing frequently-requested Web pages. Prospective agents can now complete online testing immediately from any office so branch managers can make faster hiring decisions.

With Novell® ZENworks® Linux Management, Western & Southern Life administers its 180+ Linux servers from a central location. The IT staff can now distribute new configurations to all its branch offices in minutes and schedule updates on weekends.

“It was often difficult to push out files to our caching devices, but SUSE Linux Enterprise is a multi-function platform, so, we can build whatever we want,” said Sean Keplinger, technical analyst at Western & Southern Financial Group. “SUSE Linux Enterprise comes with a lot of tools out of the box and gives us a platform to try out new open source applications without requiring a huge financial investment.”

Western & Southern has 40 SUSE Linux Enterprise Servers in its corporate offices running a variety of mission-critical applications. The company is also taking advantage

of Xen virtualization in SUSE Linux Enterprise Server and plans to migrate many of its Sun Solaris applications to Linux.

“Xen virtualization is helping us dramatically consolidate servers,” said Keplinger. “For instance, our annuity system will now require one server instead of five. Virtualization also makes it easier to provision new applications for our users, without the prohibitive costs of new hardware.”

Results

Western & Southern Life implemented SUSE Linux Enterprise Server in each of its branch offices for 25 percent of the cost of an equivalent proprietary solution. With a flexible platform, the company can take advantage of open source applications to reduce software costs, such as proxy software which has increased caching speed by 50 percent.

Using Novell ZENworks Linux Management, one or two administrators can manage all 180+ servers, reducing IT administration by 50 percent. With Xen virtualization, the company has consolidated servers and plans to move many of its UNIX applications to a virtualized Linux environment.

“Having SUSE Linux Enterprise Server in each of our branch offices allows us to do more for our users, with fewer resources and less cost,” said Frenette. “We are already getting a host of requests for new business applications. We consider this the foundation for a lot more to come.”



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