



DISCOUNT TIRE ACCELERATES ITS E-COMMERCE BUSINESS WITH RED HAT SATELLITE AND IBM

FAST FACTS

Company	Discount Tire Company
Industry	Consumer - Automotive Retail
Geography	Scottsdale, Arizona
Business Challenge	Support the rapidly growing e-commerce side of the business while keeping costs contained and complying with strict PCI security standards
Software	Red Hat Enterprise Linux, Red Hat Satellite, Apache, WebLogic, IBM Lotus Domino Server
Hardware	50 Dell x86 servers
Migration Path	Microsoft Windows to Red Hat Enterprise Linux
Benefits	Provided an easily managed, secure, and utterly reliable platform for Discount Tire's e-commerce business. Enabled compliance with PCI security standards. Increased IT staff productivity and contained costs due to the ability to easily provision, maintain, and manage servers.



BACKGROUND

Discount Tire, the world's largest independent tire and wheel retailer has displayed tenacity and a can-do attitude from the day it opened its doors. Its founder, Bruce Halle, started out in 1960 with six tires and a portable air tank that he would refill at a local gas station since he didn't have an air compressor. Over the next nearly fifty years he built the company - literally tire by tire - into one of the industry's leading success stories. Today, Discount Tire has more than 725 stores in 21 states, and both Tire Business and Modern Tire Dealer have ranked Discount Tire Company as the No. 1 independent tire retailer based on number of retail outlets and annual revenues. The firm is also listed by Forbes magazine as No. 171 of the top 500 privately held companies.

BUSINESS CHALLENGE

In 2000, Discount Tire Company decided to bring management of its e-commerce infrastructure in-house after having outsourced it for several years. The IT team originally tried building a new e-commerce system on a Windows platform, "but that was failing miserably," said Will Darton, senior server support administrator for Discount Tire. The team decided to test whether Red Hat Enterprise Linux might be a suitable alternative. After various tests and load balances, The team discovered that Red Hat Enterprise Linux was more than capable- due to its rock-solid reliability and stability. "We started out small with a very simple e-commerce site with a very basic shopping cart," he recalled. "And our online presence and business activity experienced tremendous growth."

By 2005, Discount Tire's e-commerce business had grown so large, Darton realized he needed help managing the proliferating number of Red Hat Enterprise Linux servers deployed. Provisioning and patching began to use more and more of the team's limited resources given the number of servers, and Darton now had to comply with the Payment Card Industry (PCI) security standards set by the

PCI Security Standards Council to ensure adequate protections against fraud, hacking, and other threats during processing of credit card payments were in place. "The ability to comply with PCI standards is absolutely critical, as failure to do so can result in stiff fines, suspension of rights to process credit card payments, or both," said Darton.

Discount Tire had also been using IBM Lotus Domino Server running on Microsoft Windows for its business-critical internal email system. The reliability and performance of the Lotus applications was a critical aspect of the company's ability to succeed, but consistent reliability and downtime issues on Windows was directly impacting the day-to-day operations of Discount Tire.

Discount Tire's IT team was spending a great deal of its time dealing with tactical systems issues rather than issues that were more strategic to the business.

"I've been in the IT industry for about 20 years now, and Red Hat is far and above any other company I've ever worked with. Not only are its products of the highest caliber, but it is incredibly responsive to all our needs. Red Hat support is top-of-the-line, and the Red Hat phone number is on my phone's speed dial, and it is going to stay there."

-Will Darton, senior server support administrator,

Discount Tire

SOLUTION

Today, Red Hat Enterprise Linux supports what Darton describes as an "enormous e-commerce environment" of 50 Red Hat Enterprise Linux physical servers and dozens of virtual machines that include Apache servers, WebLogic servers, and several dozen quality assurance (QA) and development machines. The firm currently runs its entire e-commerce operation on Red Hat Enterprise Linux as well as numerous internal applications, including its Lotus Domino server application.

With the increasing Lotus-on-Windows performance issues, the opportunity to migrate Lotus on to Red Hat Enterprise Linux arose, and the decision was made without hesitation. Since migrating to Red Hat Enterprise Linux, the reliability and performance of Lotus Domino has increased. IT resources were freed up to focus on more strategic issues, and updating the Red Hat Enterprise Linux servers with new patches now takes just one to two hours a month.

To manage its Red Hat systems, in 2005 Discount Tire deployed Red Hat Satellite, an easy-to-use systems management platform for Linux infrastructures. Built on open standards, Red Hat Satellite provides powerful systems administration capabilities such as management, provisioning, and monitoring for large Linux deployments.

"My Red Hat account rep came to me and said 'here is something you should implement once you grow a little bigger,'" recalled Darton.

"Our architecture was currently ten servers and I was realizing the need for a management tool, I took one look at Red Hat Satellite and said, 'I want this now.'" With the help of Red Hat Consulting, Discount Tire had it installed, configured, and performing within a month, and we have never looked back. "Satellite is my Swiss army knife - I haven't found anything I can't make it do," he said.



BENEFITS

The use of Red Hat Enterprise Linux at Discount Tire started over eight years ago, and due to measurable results and reliability, it has since garnered the attention of the C-suite because of the success it has made possible in the e-commerce arena. "Our e-business has been a huge win for us since its inception, and Red Hat Enterprise Linux has been a key part of that. It's given us a lot of visibility within the company," he said.

In terms of reliability, Red Hat Enterprise Linux has surpassed all expectations. "Obviously, our e-commerce environment has to be available 24/7/365 at 99.99 percent availability. That was absolutely mission-critical," said Darton. "And our internal applications running under Red Hat Enterprise Linux include inventory management and email - things that people cannot live without. We have been able to trust Red Hat explicitly that everything will just work."

Today, whenever his team gets requests for new applications or hardware, their first question is, "will it run on Red Hat Enterprise Linux?" said Darton. "At this point, we're trying to minimize placing anything new on Windows. It has its niche, but in terms of reliability and scalability, Red Hat Enterprise Linux has it beat."

And Darton said that today he could not live without Red Hat Satellite. "It's the difference between running around the data center repeatedly loading CDs and DVDs, and hitting a couple keystrokes," he said.

"Previously, provisioning was a time burden for our team as we were adding or re-provisioning about 5 servers per month and it would take 3 hours per system to provision.

Now When I use Satellite's provisioning capability, I can provision new servers, with a specific build, at the push of a button. It saves me over 2 and a half hours per system or about 13 hours per month. Which for one person, is a considerable gain in productivity," said Darton.

With about 5 new servers or re-provisions per month, the time savings with Satellite has resulted in important productivity gains.

Previously when deploying a new server, it would take more than three hours by the time Darton positioned it in the rack, built and configured it. "Now I just press a button and away it goes," he said. "And to me, time is money."

Like many others in today's challenging economy, Discount Tire is in "conservation mode," he said. "We're managing our expenses carefully and trying to find more efficient way of doing things." Satellite has enabled him to do this while maintaining the quality of the service he delivers to both internal users and external customers. And if it weren't for Red Hat Satellite, Darton would need a much larger staff. He estimates that without Satellite, he'd have to hire at least two additional system administrators.

And his ability to stay on top of PCI compliance grows more critical every day as Discount Tire's e-commerce business continues to expand. "Because Red Hat Satellite ensures that I am up to date on my patching, it has saved us enormous amount of time and countless headaches there," said Darton.

With Red Hat Satellite, Discount Tire has access to Red Hat Network updates and has the ability to maintain local control over the management, administration, and monitoring of our systems, which provides Discount Tire with the ability to easily comply with PCI security standards, increase staff productivity, and successfully scale our e-commerce business," said Darton. Moving forward, Discount Tire will be taking a close look at Red Hat Directory Server integrated with Active Directory, to fully utilize the management capabilities.

"Now that we have deployed Satellite, I can enhance our e-commerce environment with it's provisioning capability in minutes. This has the ability to allow Discount Tire the opportunity to increase revenue through our e-commerce site in a shorter timeframe. And as I mentioned before, Time is Money!" said Darton.

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