

Exel offers customers enhanced performance and reliability with IBM Informix

Overview

■ The Challenge

Many of Exel's potential customers were impressed by its Windows-based EFACS integrated business solution, but wanted a system that would run in a non-Microsoft environment. To develop a platform-independent version of the software, Exel needed a more versatile transactional database.



■ The Solution

Exel developed EFACS E/8 using open technologies, and worked with Bell Micro (www.bellmicro.eu), an IBM Premier Business Partner, to port the solution to IBM Informix Dynamic Server 11 – providing the flexibility to offer IBM AIX, UNIX and Linux compatible versions of the software.

■ The Benefits

EFACS now runs on most major proprietary and open operating systems, offering more choice to customers. Informix offers improved database performance and stability even for very large environments – making it easier for EFACS to scale to match business growth.

Exel Computer Systems plc was established in 1985, and has grown to become a leading force in the provision of integrated business solutions for manufacturing, accounting and commercial control. The company's philosophy is to supply manufacturing companies with state-of-the-art, flexible business solutions, helping them to achieve leading-edge business operability. The company is based in Nottingham, UK, and employs 70 people.

Exel's main product is EFACS, a fully integrated enterprise resource planning solution for mid-sized manufacturing companies. The browser-based solution offers comprehensive functionality for

almost all major business areas, from supply chain management to CRM and e-commerce, providing a one-stop shop for IT and avoiding the complexities of a best-of-breed environment.

EFACS was originally developed as a UNIX-based solution, but in 1996, a decision was taken to port the solution to Microsoft Windows and use the Microsoft SQL Server database platform. Subsequently, it became apparent that there was a growing market for EFACS on other platforms – including IBM AIX and Linux – so Exel decided to develop a third-generation version that would be compatible with all the major enterprise operating systems.

“We realised that by redeveloping EFACS using open technologies, we would be able to offer new customers a much wider choice of environments – and it would also be easier for us to



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support our original UNIX customers,” explains Jonathan Orme, Marketing Manager at Exel. “But there was a problem – the SQL Server database only runs on Windows, so we needed to find a more versatile database platform.”

A new database platform

Exel evaluated a number of different database platforms for flexibility, performance, reliability and scalability, before selecting IBM Informix Dynamic Server 11 (IDS).

“IDS means we can offer EFACS E/8 on a variety of different Linux and UNIX platforms alongside our Microsoft-based offering,” says Jonathan Orme. “Our commitment to open systems means that our customers can avoid proprietary technologies if they want to – so we can fit in with their IT strategy, instead of them fitting in with ours.”

Exel worked with Bell Micro, an IBM Premier Business Partner and Informix specialist, to prepare for the port to IDS.

“We still have a lot of experience in-house on the older versions of Informix, but Bell Micro really helped us get up to speed on the new features of IDS,” says Jonathan Orme. “We have enjoyed a long and productive partnership with Bell over the years, and they were absolutely the right people to help us with this new strategic direction – not only providing training and technical support, but also helping us understand how to market the IDS version of EFACS E/8 to new customers.”

Matt Rodwell, IBM Software Business Manager at Bell Micro, comments: “Our latest benchmarks show that in terms of transactional performance,

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*Jonathan Orme
Marketing Manager
Exel*

IDS is considerably faster than most competing databases. For this reason, it can be a great option for integrated solutions like EFACS that are continually being accessed by large numbers of users across the enterprise.”

“The typical EFACS implementation supports around 30 users, but we have a few customers with several hundred – and it was vital for our new database to be able to offer the same level of performance in all environments. EFACS E/8 has a lot to offer these larger companies, so we were delighted when our tests showed that IDS performs well and reliably in a variety of complex environments.”

He concludes: “Thanks to IBM Informix Dynamic Server and the strong partnership between Bell Micro and our in-house team, EFACS E/8 provides a comprehensive high-performance integrated business solution that is reliable and scalable, and will run on almost any standard enterprise operating system.”



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