

DB2 Data Management Software

Exxcom helps companies dial back telecom costs with DB2 for Linux.

Overview

■ Application

Web-based telecom usage monitoring and reporting service

■ Business Benefits

For Exxcom: Full payback expected within 20 months of implementation; first to market with comprehensive solution; ratio of customers to operations analysts increased from 50/1 to 1,000/1; global expansion at existing staffing levels

For customers: Up to 30% reduction in telecom expenses; minimal capital expenditure and significantly less overhead in comparison with in-house solutions

■ Software

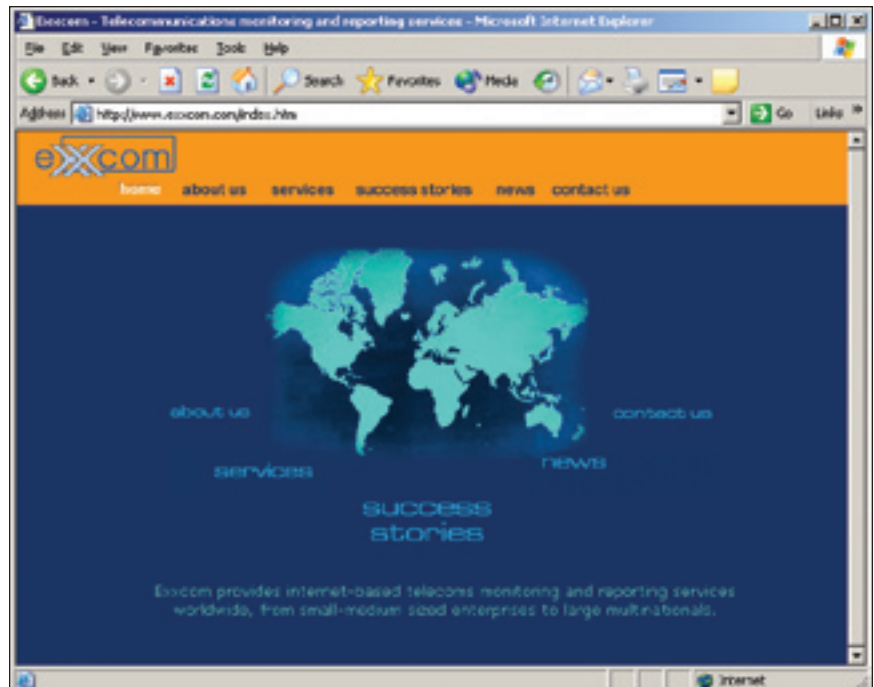
IBM DB2® Universal Database™ for Linux®

■ Hardware

IBM @server xSeries™
350 servers

■ Business Partner

JFDI Technology Ltd.



With DB2 at their core, Exxcom's solutions deliver real benefits to customers, that can add up to hundreds of thousands of dollars per year.

Ever have the infuriating experience of reviewing your home phone bill and finding a 60-second local call that cost you more than a longer long-distance call—just because you had used the wrong calling card? Now imagine how many such incidents might be happening every month—and at what cost—within large organizations with hundreds or thousands of phone lines and mobile phones.

“We expect that our DB2 solution will enable our operations personnel to handle 1,000 customers each—20 times as many as before. What’s more, monthly report production time has been reduced from five business days to overnight.”

—Roger England, Managing Director, Exxcom Ltd.



Bridging past and future: Exxcom offers 21st-century telecom technology from the town of Shefford, founded in 1225.

For most enterprises, monitoring employee telephone costs on an ongoing basis and exposing inappropriate usage can be a decidedly effective way to reduce expenses. Until recently, however, this type of analysis required labor-intensive production and analysis of bulky printed reports. Now Exxcom Ltd. has streamlined the process with its award-winning eXXitel service, which harnesses the power of IBM DB2 Universal Database for Linux to provide Web-based telecom monitoring and reporting services. The service is expected to increase Exxcom's throughput 20-fold, enabling it to reach a broad base of multinational corporations. The company expects full payback on its \$650,000 investment within 20 months after launch.

Founded in 1993 and headquartered in Bedfordshire, England, Exxcom initially targeted local small-to-medium enterprises (SMEs) that required ongoing telecom management services but could not afford the upfront costs and ongoing overhead of an

in-house solution. Two years later, with a customer base of 350 SME sites, Exxcom expanded its focus to the global corporate market. By 2000, the company had become the UK's leading telecom bureau, with a global client list featuring such names as British Telecom, Telstra, Norweb, Nokia, 3COM and Motorola.

But Exxcom soon found that the DOS-based legacy system it was using to manually produce monthly paper reports had reached its capacity—and so had the company's operations personnel. Exxcom Managing Director Roger England explains, "We collect up to seven to eight megabytes of data per customer per day and we keep that data for six months. Multiply that by the hundreds of customers we serve and you begin to understand the volume of data we need to access and process." To continue to grow internationally while steadily enhancing its level of service, Exxcom needed to replace its inefficient report production methods with a more flexible, robust solution. The key to this solution would be a scalable and highly reliable relational database that could keep pace with the company's expanding volume of customer data.

"In terms of functionality, stability and overall cost of ownership, DB2 was head and shoulders above Oracle and the others. And because we needed the same robustness, scalability and cost-effectiveness in an operating system, we chose to implement our solution on Linux."

—Roger England

Working with IBM Business Partner JFDI Technology Ltd., Exxcom evaluated several relational database management systems (RDBMS), and chose DB2 Universal Database for Linux. England recalls, "In terms of functionality, stability and overall cost of ownership, DB2 was head and shoulders above Oracle and the others. And because we needed the same robustness, scalability and cost-effectiveness in an operating system, we chose to implement our solution on Linux."

Not only is Exxcom the first to market with a comprehensive Web-based solution, but England notes that automating the entire usage monitoring and reporting process has made Exxcom vastly more efficient. "Our operations personnel used to manage about 50 customers each," he observes. "We expect that our DB2 solution will enable our operations personnel to handle 1,000 customers each—20 times as many as before. What's more, monthly report production time has been reduced from five business days to overnight. That sort of efficiency has enabled us to focus on global expansion at existing staffing levels, and we now serve customers from Singapore to North America."



Based on DB2 software from IBM, Exxcom's telecom monitoring and reporting solution will enable each of its operations professionals to service up to 1,000 customers.

A host of services

Developed and implemented by JFDI Technology, the new reporting system collects usage data from the enterprise PBX over the Internet, processes and analyzes it according to customer-specified parameters and generates reports. Some reports are generated automatically and e-mailed to clients, while others are generated in realtime when a user logs on to the service using a standard Web browser. Typical report sets include financial analysis (costs charged per department or user, detection of fraud and misuse, identification of savings due to special calling plans); utilization of trunks and extensions; and response performance (analysis of response times and lost calls by department).

Usage data is consolidated in DB2 on an IBM @server xSeries 350 server. Several smaller xSeries servers act as repositories for incoming data files, applying additional values to the reports (such as directory information and costs) when applicable. Once the data has been processed, an e-mail report is generated and sent to the appropriate contacts based on a pre-determined schedule.

Exxcom offers a wide array of online services, including the ability to create dynamic management reports. In addition, managers may access consolidated costs for multiple sites and then drill down to detail level. Other services include summarized departmental and cost center telecom costs for input to general ledger packages, as well as daily e-mail alerts highlighting poor response times, abuse and high usage of telephone lines.

"With our service, customers can identify areas where resources are being used inappropriately," explains England. "For instance, employees might use phone cards for local calls and end up paying a higher price, or place calls over the public network when a cheaper private network is available." England estimates that some of Exxcom's customers have reduced telecom expenses by as much as 30 percent—just by exposing inappropriate usage.

Leading the way

England says the DB2 solution has enabled Exxcom to expand not only into new markets, but into new service areas as well. For example, the company recently began offering eXXpend, a unique consolidated billing service—also based on DB2 for Linux at the backend—that processes multi-format billing data from different suppliers. In addition, Exxcom will soon extend its services to cover not just phone usage, but also usage of Internet resources, applying "pseudo-cost" algorithms to analyze the relative distribution of bandwidth costs among employees.

In the near future, Exxcom plans to extend its marketing to the supply side of the equation, offering subcontracted services to telcos as well as to facilities management companies that outsource voice and data networks. "The IBM DB2 solution has extended our market-leading ability multidimensionally," England notes. "On one plane, we can direct the appropriate services to a variety of enterprise types along the telecom supply chain. On another, we can scale our operation to accommodate a growing number of multinational customers—who in turn can leverage our services in the country of their choice. DB2 has enabled us to do this faster and far more cost-effectively than we ever thought possible."

For more information

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For information faxed direct to your location: 1 800 IBM-4FAX.

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