

RENFE gets on track with Linux and WebSphere Portal on IBM System z



Overview

■ The Challenge

With 18 different business units, each with its own intranet solution in a distributed environment, RENFE had difficulty in presenting information consistently; IT administration costs were high, and the architecture had limited scalability

■ The Solution

Working with IBM Global Services, RENFE deployed IBM WebSphere Portal running under SUSE Linux Enterprise server on the IBM System z platform, to create a single, consistent source of corporate information

■ The Benefits

Fast access to information on a unified platform; reduced operational costs through IT consolidation; ability to create new virtualized servers rapidly and easily, without the expense and delay of procuring new hardware

RENFE (www.renfe.es) is the Spanish national railway operator. Founded in 1941 and headquartered in Madrid, the company manages around 15,000 kilometres of track, from high-speed inter-city lines to local commuter lines. RENFE employs more than 32,000 people in two separate operating companies: Administrador de Infraestructuras Ferroviarias (ADIF) constructs, manages and maintains the rail infrastructure, while Renfe Operadora owns the trains and is responsible for operating passenger and freight services.

Prior to its reorganisation into the two new operating companies, RENFE was composed of 18 separate business units, each with its own intranet system running various line of business applications. These included human resources systems, helpdesk applications and various internal communication portals. To drive better integration across the business and improve process efficiency, RENFE made a strategic decision to create a single information portal for all employees.

Carlos Varela, Director of IT Systems for Renfe Operadora, comments: "Our aim was both to consolidate the physical infrastructure and to integrate all of the existing employee information systems into a unified resource."

Right on track with IBM

Working with IBM Business Consulting Services, RENFE opted to run the new corporate portal on the IBM System z platform under SUSE Linux Enterprise Server. The company already had extensive experience of Linux on Intel-based servers, and had also tested it on its existing IBM zSeries 990 server.

“We determined that Linux was the ideal environment for our consolidated intranet services, and we wanted to take full advantage of the high availability and security of the System z platform,” said Varela. “We were also interested in the ability to run multiple virtualized Linux servers under z/VM on the mainframe, and this proved to be an important benefit.”

When the decision came to consolidate RENFE into the two new operating companies (Renfe Operadora and ADIF), the IT function simply cloned the existing Linux servers using z/VM, creating a duplicate virtual intranet for ADIF.

“Rather than having to set up an entirely new system for ADIF, we just cloned the RENFE intranet and set up new virtual Linux servers on the z990,” comments Varela. “This is one of the key advantages of Linux on the z990 system: the ease and speed of creating new servers, without any additional hardware costs.”

High-speed information systems

The corporate portal at Renfe Operadora, developed in conjunction with IBM, integrated the numerous internal information systems into a single, consistent source of information for all employees. The main corporate database runs under z/OS on the z990, and the Linux-based intranet portal has high-speed, high-security access to the information it contains. In addition to

facilitating corporate communications, it is helping employees identify and nurture synergies between different parts of the business, for improved efficiency.

Varela comments, “As you can imagine, it was difficult and time-consuming to manage the 18 different systems that used to provide information to employees. Now that we have consolidated the intranet into two parts, on Linux on the z990, it is very easy to manage and offers much faster access to important information.”

Low-cost network growth

Carlos Varela is confident that the scalability of the System z platform and the flexibility of running virtualized Linux servers in a z/VM partition can enable the solution to adapt to future growth or change. He says, “It was important to be able to manage the consolidated portal as cost-effectively as possible. We wanted to be able to add technology without adding headcount or administrative effort.

“Both the non-disruptive scalability of the mainframe and the virtualization capabilities of Linux mean that we can make large-scale upgrades without having to waste time, money and effort hiring and training new personnel and installing new physical servers. As we migrate services to Linux on the IBM System z platform, we anticipate that we will require fewer people to manage them, and our long-term costs can be reduced.”

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