



Intranet drive keeps major automotive supplier in the money

For the Spicer Axle Division of Dana Corporation, a major supplier of chassis-ready axles to the Big Three automotive manufacturers, a mainframe-based divisional computing system had long been one of the pillars of its business success. But recently, Spicer found it needed to implement an intranet-based financial information system to maximize operational flexibility and system accessibility. The question was, how could it reap the benefits of an intranet without compromising the performance, reliability, and security of its existing host-based network? Working with IBM Global Services (IGS), the division has found a very rewarding answer.

“Management is impressed that an IBM mainframe system can excel in the arena of Web servers and UNIX servers.”

—Trey Bouslog, Manager of Technical Services, Spicer Axle Division, Dana Corporation

IGS decided against installing Web server software on a separate UNIX or Windows NT system. Instead, it delivered a completely integrated solution that enabled Spicer's S/390 9672 Parallel Enterprise Server to run IBM Internet Connection Server (the predecessor

product to Lotus Domino Go Webserver™) software alongside the company's business applications. This solution eliminated file transfer and replication among multiple servers, and improved performance, allowing the Web server to benefit from the scalability, security, and efficient centralized management of the S/390. The centralized configuration also simplified disaster recovery by reducing the potential points of failure.

Smart choices: an intranet and the S/390

Spicer's financial information application, the Division Measurement System (DMS), was designed to improve the way executives track and view financial performance information for the division's eight U.S. manufacturing and assembly plants. Dana opted for an intranet,

Application	Intranet delivery of financial reports
Business Benefits	Improved reporting efficiency; time and hardware cost savings; enhanced security and scalability
Software	IBM® Internet Connection Server IBM OS/390® UNIX Services
Hardware	IBM S/390® Parallel Enterprise Server
Services	IBM Global Services



Trey Bouslog and Spicer's Division Measurement System leveraged IBM S/390's new technology to reduce costs and improve financial tracking.

rather than a full client-server model, to support the application. That decision was pivotal because the intranet approach leveraged standard, familiar Web browsers as user interfaces, reducing the time and cost associated with front-end application development and user training.

The initial selection of the IBM S/390 Parallel Enterprise Server was an equally important step for the Spicer Axle Division. According to Trey Bouslog, Spicer's manager of technical services, the company chose the new S/390 9672 because of its potential to reduce operating expenses and the advantages of its new technology. "The S/390 allows us to run existing applications while deploying new applications that are Web-enabled," Bouslog says.

Simplifying financial performance reporting

Before the DMS, users at each plant extracted data from the mainframe and had to key it into a spreadsheet to create the graphs they needed. To give all the plants a division-wide view of the data, the individual plant results had to be consolidated every month at headquarters, then faxed or e-mailed back to the plants.

Now Spicer's financial reporting process is much simpler, more timely, and more productive. The DMS allows users at each of the division's plants to work with business data directly on the S/390 from their browsers. They can graphically display, track, and analyze trends in financial performance, such as sales and detailed expenses, and immediately identify areas that need attention. When users at any plant request a local or division-wide report, the IBM Internet Connection Server (ICS) accesses the DMS database on the S/390 and returns the results to the Web browser. NetFactory NetCharts, a Java tool, is used to create the graphs. These are readily available online the day after the close of each month's financial reports.

S/390 Web server keeps data consolidated and secure

The ability to run Web software on a mainframe is not trivial, since most of the applications available today were not designed for this platform. For example, two primary components of the DMS solution—ICS and NetCharts—are UNIX applications. But they can run on the S/390 thanks to IBM OS/390 UNIX Services software, providing a simple solution to a difficult

problem. In effect, the software creates two operating systems on a single machine, allowing UNIX and OS/390 applications to run side by side while enabling data sharing between the systems.

Since 80 percent of the division's data was already on the host, the Spicer Axle Division decided to move the other 20 percent there as well. This placed all the data under the protection of the S/390 security mechanism, which the division had relied on for years. "It integrated well with the Internet Connection Server," says Bouslog, "and that gave us the assurance that we were secure."

A packaged solution for easy integration

IBM made integration easy through a packaged Entry Service Offering (ESO) and provided project support through ICS. The ESO package included the S/390 hardware and CMOS, the OS/390 operating system, maintenance, and other services.

The ICS team set up the division's new S/390 system using IBM Software Excel Installation Express, a customization of the operating system that hastens installation. "Software Express helped us get OS/390 up and running quickly," says Bouslog. "It's all integrated into one operating system that can basically be loaded as a single package." The alternative would have been to configure several separate software programs and spend a considerable amount of time getting them to communicate with each other, Bouslog adds. "IBM was helpful in bringing us up to speed on Web servers and UNIX Services, and in helping us develop applications."

Two other Dana Corporation divisions are considering implementing similar systems. At the Spicer Axle Division itself, the DMS project has sparked other ideas for using the intranet with its common Web browser interface. According to Bouslog, projects in the works include asset management, system performance statistics, Web-enabling a new computer-aided design (CAD) database, and additional enhancements to DMS.

Dana Corporation executives are evidently pleased with the results to date. "Management is impressed that an IBM mainframe system can excel in the arena of Web servers and UNIX servers," says Bouslog.

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