

DDB Belgium

Helping an Award-Winning Ad Agency Become More Nimble with a Sun Virtualized Server Platform

Customer Success Story

Industry

- Media and Entertainment

Business Issues

- Deliver around-the-clock availability for global workforce
- Ensure adequate storage for a growing volume of rich media files
- Upgrade internal scheduling and messaging systems
- Consolidate servers to reduce maintenance and optimize performance

Solution

DDB consolidated nearly a dozen legacy servers onto a highly available and scalable server platform based on two Sun Fire™ servers with paired dual-core processors, a 1.5 TB storage array, and server virtualization capabilities. It adopted the Sun Java™ Communications Suite as an e-mail and scheduling solution for its distributed global workforce, improving its 24x7 availability.

Business Results

- Higher availability for critical messaging applications and very large multimedia files
- Ability to scale infrastructure flexibly to keep up with growth
- Productivity gains for IT team
- Anticipated hardware cost avoidance of EUR 60,000 over the next five years

Products/Services/Solutions

- Sun Fire X4200 Server
- Solaris 10 Operating System
- Sun Java Communications Suite
- Sun StorageTek 2540 Array
- SunSpectrum Support

URL Reference

sun.com/customers

DDB Belgium is an arm of DDB, a worldwide advertising agency founded in 1949 by famed ad man Bill Bernbach. DDB has about 12,000 employees globally and 80 in Belgium. The group creates ad campaigns for radio, TV, print, online and other media for major companies such as Volkswagen, Pfizer, Unilever and Clorox. DDB has won many awards for its clever and effective ads.

Success at a glance

Ad agency DDB Belgium can create award-winning ads for Volkswagen or make the local power and gas company sound exciting. That's the easy part. The challenge is ensuring a reliable technology platform on which to store and share hundreds of gigabytes of digital video, audio, graphics and text, across multiple operating systems, 24x7.

In late 2006, the agency's IT infrastructure was faltering. A Windows-based e-mail and scheduling system was developing problems. And its patchwork of servers was hard to maintain and wasting storage space. "We face firm deadlines. We could never go to a client and say, 'I'm sorry, but we had a problem with the server so we can't deliver on time'," says Pascal Patesson, IT director at DDB. "That would cost us a lot of money."

With the help of Sun™ Advantage Partner ABSI, DDB decided to consolidate onto a single, virtualized server and storage platform that would provide 24x7 availability. DDB has been working with ABSI for five years, since Sun recommended the firm for an earlier project.

The agency chose Sun hardware, since it was impressed with the high availability and stability of an existing Sun server. For

virtualization, DDB adopted VMware, which was already delivering higher availability and flexibility to other DDB branches.

ABSI helped DDB consolidate nearly a dozen legacy servers and storage appliances onto two Sun Fire X4200 servers with two dual-core AMD processors running the Solaris™ 10 Operating System, plus a Sun StorageTek™ 2540 array with 1.5 terabytes of raw storage. Both Sun Fire X4200 servers are connected to the shared Sun StorageTek 2540 array over Fibre Channel connections. This configuration ensures uninterrupted operation and eliminates the threat of loss or corruption of information, even if one server crashes.

VMware ESX Server software lets DDB run both Solaris and Windows on the same server. In addition, VMware infrastructure component VMotion, allows DDB to move a running application from one physical server to another, such as to perform routine maintenance without interruption.

To complete the installation, the agency replaced its aging messaging and calendaring systems with the Sun Java Communications Suite, which supports its e-mail clients, including Microsoft Outlook, Thunderbird/Lightning and Macintosh-based systems.

ABSI provides ongoing support through the SunSpectrum™ program. “It’s so helpful to get everything from the same vendor— servers, VMware, Solaris and the Java Communications Suite—with a single point of contact,” Patesson says.

The biggest advantage of the Sun/VMware platform, according to Patesson, is high availability levels. Five months after installation, there have been no outages, even though demand keeps growing.

Also, the Sun Fire X4200 server is inherently scalable. DDB can partition off a new virtual server for specific applications or projects whenever it likes. And for more computing

power, it can expand the number of server processors. The storage solution easily scales to five terabytes or more. Patesson estimates that DDB will save up to EUR 8,000 a year over the next five years (USD 60,000), simply from not having to replace obsolete machines or add new ones.

Lastly, the solution reduces the time DDB’s small IT team spends on fixing outages and doing routine maintenance. Now, the team has much more time to devote to users’ needs and plan ahead for new IT projects, which will help keep DDB one of the most innovative ad agencies around.

“I am happy with all the results: high availability, pricing and redundancy. And all my end users are quite satisfied— no down time or other platform problems. That’s the value of our relationship with Sun today.”

Pascal Patesson

IT Director, DDB Belgium