

POWERED BY SUN AND ORACLE, E-BIZ AT SPECIALIZED IS CRANKING

Key Features

Business/IT Needs

- Support rapid growth of B2B and B2C transactions globally
- Cut IT cost and complexity through consolidation
- Maintain high performance through peak loads and spikes in demand

Sun Products/Services

- Systems: Sun Fire E6900 server, Sun StorageTek™ 6140 Fibre Array
- Software: Solaris OS

Sun Partner Products/Services

- Oracle ERP Business Suite
- Oracle iStore E-commerce Application
- Oracle/Hyperion Financial Management
- Helio Solutions integration services

Results

- 99.9% availability levels for Oracle-based e-commerce sites
- Cost savings and efficiency gains through consolidation
- Scalability on demand with plug-and-play architecture
- Higher customer satisfaction and sales conversion rates

Turns out bike racing and e-commerce have a lot in common. You don't win with blazing speed alone; efficiency and teamwork are every bit as important. Avoiding downtime is critical. You need a strong support system to keep things moving smoothly. And when you start winning consistently at home, you get a chance to go global. Just ask Specialized Bicycles. This U.S.-based industry leader is winning on the road and on the Web — with a little help from its partners: Sun, Oracle, and Helio Solutions.

“It’s Always Running, Period.”

Specialized Bicycles produces more than 25 lines of bikes — from recreational road bikes to mountain bikes to racing bikes — as well as a variety of equipment, including clothing, helmets and parts. From its headquarters in Morgan Hill, California, the company has built a global e-commerce business, serving a vast network of distributors and millions of consumers through its Web site.

To power its e-commerce site and run its core operations, Specialized chose infrastructure from two high-tech powerhouses, Sun and Oracle, with configuration, integration, and professional services from Helio Solutions. Specialized now operates one of the largest Oracle iStore sites in the U.S. Its Oracle software runs on a 16-processor, Solaris™-based, Sun Fire™ E6900 server.

“Reliability is the single most important characteristic our e-commerce infrastructure must deliver,” said Specialized CIO Ron Pollard. “Our consumer site alone gets more than a million hits a month, and our ability to convert sales depends on our site being up and running predictably. Since we upgraded to the E6900 server our iStore availability rate has been 99.9%. It’s always running, period. That translates directly into higher revenue and higher customer satisfaction.”

One Server, One Instance, Global Reach

Success brings new challenges, and according to Mr. Pollard the key challenge from an IT perspective is the increasing globalization of Specialized's business.

"We're growing fast within the U.S. market, but even faster overseas," he said. "We're very big in Europe; we've opened direct distribution in Japan; we have dealers all over the world. We needed to get more efficient managing both B2B and B2C transactions."

A big part of the solution was consolidation. Specifically, Specialized consolidated its Oracle ERP Business Suite and iStore applications into a single instance, running on a single Sun Fire E6900 server.

"When performance and reliability are critical, simpler is better," said Mr. Pollard, "especially when you consider the sheer number of patches and upgrades and updates you need to manage to keep your ERP applications current. By consolidating we simplified the environment and cut costs without sacrificing anything in terms of performance or availability."

Blazing Performance and Headroom to Grow

Specialized has been running on Sun since 1994, and recently upgraded from the Sun Fire E6500 server to the E6900 model. "The new server gave us an opportunity not only to consolidate but also to take advantage of state-of-the-art technology from Sun and Oracle," he said.

For example, Specialized is now able to take full advantage of UltraSPARC™ IV processors, which dramatically improved the performance of its applications and e-commerce sites. "The performance is solid and our end users are quite happy with it," he said. "There hasn't been a single performance-related issue since we moved to the E6900."

With the Sun Fire E6900 server, Specialized also improved its ability to scale up on demand. "We can plug and play without reengineering anything," said database administrator Tommy Pham. "When we need more resources we just plug in another board. And we can add processors when we need them. We're at 16 now and we can scale up to 24 in the E6900."

Tested, Proven at the Sun Solution Center for Oracle

According to Mr. Pollard, Sun, Oracle, and Helio Solutions are much more than technology vendors. "We consider them to be strategic partners," he said, "and they work with each other as well as they work with us. The support is great and there's no fingerpointing."

As an example, Mr. Pollard points to the experience Specialized had at the Sun Solution Center for Oracle, a "proving ground" for combined Sun and Oracle solutions. At the centers, customers can try out specific concepts before they buy or implement any actual products—so they can find out what works and what doesn't work right away—and they can leverage the combined expertise of Sun and Oracle engineers, integrators, and software vendors, all in one place.

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"We needed to upgrade the OS, and it was not as simple a task as it first appeared," he said. "When you're talking about an OS upgrade, you can't afford to guess wrong—you need to be absolutely sure everything's going to work the way you expect it to. So we went to the Sun Solution Center with real data and used real systems to test everything out. We got outstanding support from the engineers there—particularly Ron Plunk from Sun and Ted Earle from Helio Solutions—and they helped us make the transition seamlessly."

So is peace of mind the ultimate result of Specialized's relationship with Sun and Oracle? "I'd put it a little differently," said Mr. Pollard. "Tommy Pham is our only Oracle DBA. He's the only administrator for this whole environment, and this environment is critical to the success of our business. Because of our relationship with Sun, Oracle, and Helio Solutions, when Tommy asks for time off, I can give it to him. How's that for confidence?"



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