Migros Achieves Critical Business Continuity with SIOS Data Replication Solutions

Swiss supermarket giant launches data protection, high availability platforms for new servers, thanks to the help of SIOS partners Realstuff, Computer Concept

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As companies worldwide consider how they will address their aging server infrastructure, Swiss supermarket giant Migros has jumpstarted its server system migration, an effort that required a unique approach for data protection and high availability for the IT infrastructure at its national network of stores.

For the effort, which started in Spring 2009, Migros turned to Realstuff Informatik AG, a Bern, Switzerland-based provider of IT service management for businesses and government entities that is a reseller of SIOS solutions to the supermarket giant. During the project, Realstuff worked with the SIOS Competence and Support Center for Central and Eastern Europe, based in Dresden, Germany and operated by Computer Concept, for system design, customer training and native language support. Very important to the Migros decision was the opportunity to get 24x7x365 support during the regional office time from the Competence and Support Center. The joint endeavor focused on replacement of the point of sale (POS) server system in Migros' 650 stores with a new platform that was more efficient to operate and minimized the threat of downtime.

Migros' system update is occurring against a global tide that has seen businesses generally cut back on server spending. Research firm IDC's Worldwide Quarterly Server Tracker forecast that global server market spending would decline 22.1 percent in 2009. However, the server market was showing signs of stabilization as it entered 2010, IDC said, with numerous IT users starting to make strategic decisions in advance of improving business conditions.

The migration to a new server set-up was no small feat for Migros. The company has hundreds of stores, employs about 84,000 and serves more than 2 million cooperative members.

About 95 percent of all Swiss households shop at its locations, the same shops that have a new POS system in place or are getting a new system. Migros also has an online retail presence, and operates bookstores, banks and gas stations as well as stores selling furniture and electronics.

When Migros began to develop and launch its new server platform, it turned to Realstuff to meet the unique requirements for the deployment. The company wanted an open source server platform that didn't rely on third-party virtual environments while at the same time providing reliable and affordable high availability and data protection.

The Challenge

Migros uses a POS server system providing price and product assortment information at all its stores. High availability for the POS data is critical for Migros' day-to-day sales: Without a functioning system, product pricing and the weighing of goods could not take place at the company's locations.

In evaluating options for updating its POS servers, Migros concluded it wanted an open source server solution, citing the lower costs and flexibility typically associated with these types of platforms. For the open source platform, the company selected Groundworks, provider of open source system and network management software that counts Realstuff as an exclusive partner.

In addition, the company determined it didn't want a virtual server platform. "Migros didn't like the idea of having its data and service available on third party servers" said Richard Huber, manager and member of the executive board at Realstuff.

"Migros, required an open source server set-up with high availability and continuous data protection that was independent of a virtual environment and operated internally by the company," said Mr. Huber. "This is somewhat unique as other companies tend to choose virtual environments."

Migros takes a conservative approach to managing its IT infrastructure and protecting data. The company didn't want to rely on a third-party virtual arrangement. "They want to make sure they are keeping the operations within the company rather than relying on other people" said Mr. Huber. To address Migros' requirements, Realstuff, along with Computer Concept and the SIOS Competence and Support Center, picked SIOS Protection Suite for replication to safeguard data contained within the supermarket giant's new server set-up.

The Solution

Realstuff implemented the SIOS Protection Suite high-availability solution for the constant monitoring of Migros' POS server systems. SIOS software replication secured the data generated by the monitoring software.

At each Migros location, the continuous data protection set-up uses two servers, both located in the same data center. Under the data protection protocol, if one server is not working the other instantaneously takes over the work. In addition, both servers mirror data assets on the monitoring system.

The regional Competence and Support Center consulted Realstuff on the Migros project, providing insight and direction on the launch and use of the SIOS solutions. Realstuff's German colleague also conducted a three-day workshop for the company and Migros, providing training on the new products as well as implementation of the new POS server system.

Benefits

Citing the benefits of using the SIOS solutions, Mr. Huber listed the flexibility, reliability and simplicity of the high availability and data protection products contained within the new Migros POS server set-up.

"The implementation of the SIOS solutions is going well. Our collegues from Dresden did a good job in consulting on the best way to install the SIOS solutions so that data is kept in sync all the time" said Huber.

SIOS Protection Suite software provides continuous monitoring of servers, storage, applications, databases and network connections to detect points of failure. The high-availability clustering solution aims to reduce planned and unplanned downtime, maintain client connectivity and provide uninterrupted data access.

About SIOS

SIOS delivers innovative software solutions that provide application availability and disaster protection for Windows and Linux environments.

Clusters Your Way.™

An essential ingredient in any cluster solution, SIOS SAN and SANless clustering software provides the flexibility to build clusters your way to protect your choice of Windows or Linux environment – and any configuration (or combination) of physical, virtual and cloud (public, private, and hybrid) storage – without sacrificing performance or availability. SIOS provides unique #SANLess clustering software that eliminates both the cost and the single-point-of-failure risk of traditional SAN-based cluster solutions.

Founded in 1999, SIOS Technology Corp., is headquartered in San Mateo, California, and has offices throughout the United States, United Kingdom, and Japan.

About Realstuff, Computer Concept

Realstuff, based in Bern, Switzerland, provides professional IT system service consulting, education, management and engineering solutions for companies of all sizes and for government entities and is a SIOS reseller.

Computer Concept, based in Dresden, Germany, is a SIOS value add distributor and operated the SIOS Competence and Support Center for the Central European and Eastern Europe region.

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