

Money in their pockets

The Wet Seal finds increased capacity and decreased costs with DSS and IBM®

How does a California bikini shack grow to over 550 stores with locations in almost every state, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico? By using innovative technology to respond to market trends, which gives teenage girls, America's most fickle buyers, exactly what they want, when they want it.

A trend setting retailer of young women's fashions, The Wet Seal, Inc. – a name related to the "wet-look" bathing suit that was all the rage during the company's origins in the mid-60s – is well aware of the need for quick reaction to market change. Fashion is a fast changing business, and creating unique, exciting merchandise to tempt fashion conscious shoppers keeps Wet Seal's design and buying teams busy.

In the background, Wet Seal's IT people are also hard at work ensuring ready access to information, which allows management to make key decisions responding to market changes. Systems must also keep pace with company expansion and growing Internet sales, yet still keep expenses in check.

Michael Relich, Vice President, MIS/Chief Information Officer for The Wet Seal, says, "We run a number of mission critical systems, and in the retail environment, uptime and availability are key issues. We were planning to move our data center to a secure, off-site co-location facility as part of our disaster recovery plan. About the same time, our existing HP® equipment leases were coming due. The timing was right to put the work out for bids."

Besides handling the data center move, the supplier would be asked to both increase Wet Seal's computing capacity to accommodate future growth, and reduce expenses. A tall order? Not for Direct Systems Support, an IBM Premier Business Partner. A solution based on four leased IBM pSeries™, along with a flexibility option called Capacity on Demand, made the sale.

DSS fashions a solution that does it all Mr. Relich asked for solutions based on several platforms, including IBM. Having worked with California based Direct Systems Support (DSS) at a previous company, Mr. Relich knew about DSS's expertise and range of experience. "We felt DSS had excellent resources that would augment my staff, and they were definitely qualified to help us," says Mr. Relich.

With more than 100 IBM technical certifications in house, DSS takes justifiable pride in its expertise building corporate infrastructures using highly skilled personnel, particularly on the IBM pSeries.

"In my opinion, at this time as far as manufacturers go, IBM is the strongest technologically," says Kevin Rozynek, Director of Professional Services for DSS. "This is based on the fact that IBM received over 2,886 technology patents in the year 2000, more than the combined total of SUN, HP, Cisco, Dell, EMC, Intel, Microsoft and Oracle. They are the industry leader in technology development."

Customer Reference

DSS recommended a system based on a total of four leased IBM pSeries, along with a flexibility option called Capacity on Demand. This pSeries option allows a customer to increase processor capacity at any time in increments of two processors simply by entering a command on the operating system command line. Proposed software included Tivoli® Storage Manager (TSM) for enterprise backup and High Availability Cluster Multiprocessing (HACMP), IBM's industry leading UNIX®-based software, which detects system hardware and software failures and initiates automatic recovery actions.

Performance and capacity “When making our decision, we first looked at whether the hardware platform itself had adequate computing performance to meet our needs,” says Mr. Relich. “We also considered the availability and hardware redundancy to allow for automatic switch over to another machine in case of failure. We looked at the company’s ability to provide expertise in the system, to allow us to convert to the co-location facility. And of course we examined the economics.”

In the end, says Mr. Relich, “It wasn’t a hard decision. With IBM, DSS was able to demonstrate a lower cost of ownership with a higher level of performance and the ability to add more capacity as needed. Because moving from HP would require a substantial conversion effort, we first ran a pilot. DSS provided such phenomenal support, and in all other aspects was head and shoulders above the rest, that it made the decision quite easy.”

The IBM system was phased in over two months as part of the conversion from the data center to the co-location facility. “This allowed us to do the conversion and testing before ‘flipping the switch’ on the new hardware, knowing we could easily revert back if necessary,” says Mr. Relich. “But the conversion went very smoothly.”

Mr. Relich adds, “DSS and IBM both provided a tremendous level of customer service. I can sleep easy at night, knowing if I have a problem, I can call up DSS or IBM and they’ll be here for me. They don’t sell the equipment and leave; you can count on them to partner with you.”

Saving money is always in fashion Mr. Relich is happy with the new IBM equipment, for many reasons. “We have additional computing power that has reduced our batch processing time by about 50 percent, so we’re able to process our transactions quickly and efficiently.

Backups to our database are down to two hours from about eight. There’s a huge recovery window that allows us to bring new systems on line or deal with any systems problems. And we have a system that will accommodate the growth we’re experiencing for several more years without substantially increasing staff.”

He continues, “We’ve been able to introduce a new sales audit system and merchandise planning application without increasing expenses, and in fact we’ve lowered our overall expenses. And that’s money in Wet Seal’s pocket!

“It wasn’t a hard decision. With IBM, DSS was able to demonstrate a lower cost of ownership with a higher level of performance and the ability to add more capacity as needed.” – *Michael Relich, Vice-President, MIS/Chief Information Officer, The Wet Seal, Inc.*

Customer Reference

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IBM Business

Partner: Direct Systems Support

Solutions: IBM iSeries,

Tivoli Storage Manager

(TSM) and High

Availability Cluster

Multiprocessing (HACMP)

Territory: California

Customer Target: Healthcare,

Manufacturing, Utilities,

Federal Government

(maintain GSA Schedule)

For additional information on how Direct Systems Support can help your organization, contact us at 888-547-8300 x14, or visit our Web site at www.directsystemssupport.com