CANARA BANK

RED HAT ENTERPRISE LINUX TO POWER MISSION CRITICAL BANKING SERVICES ON APPROXIMATELY 1,000 SERVERS AND 10,000 DESKTOPS. LARGEST DEPLOYMENT OF RED HAT ENTERPRISE LINUX IN THE INDIAN BFSI SEGMENT TILL DATE

FAST FACTS	
Industry:	Banking
Geography:	India
Challenges:	Automate more than 1000 branches across the country. Modernize branch automation. Retain existing hardware. Seamlessly migrate a custom designed TBA package to the latest platform.
Solution:	Software: Red Hat Enterprise Linux Application: Integrated Branch Banking Software (IBBS)
Benefits:	Improvement in system performance by more than 8 times. Significant TCO reduction by eliminating the need for purchasing new hardware and software licenses

INTRODUCTION

Founded in 1906, Canara Bank is one of the premier banks in India, with a network of 2508 branches across the country. The bank was the first to launch networked ATMs in India and obtain an ISO Certification. Canara Bank has also achieved the distinction of being the country's highest net profit earner among nationalized banks for the year March 2005.

The bank has already carved a niche in providing IT-based services such as Networked ATMs, Anywhere Banking, Telebanking, Remote Access Terminals, Internet & Mobile Banking, Debit Cards, etc. Canara Bank has a vision to help improve the economic condition of the common people of India by inculcating the habit of savings in rural areas.

CHALLENGES

Canara Bank achieved 100% computerization very early in the course of its operational history. It deployed a number of bank automation tools such as a customized Total Branch Automation (TBA) package called Integrated Branch Banking Software (IBBS), which was developed by its subsidiary, CanBank Computer Services Ltd. (CCSL). IBBS was deployed on Novell NetWare at close to 1400 medium sized branches across the country.

Canara Bank follows a detailed tendering process for new hardware purchases, in which contracts are awarded on the basis of bids. After nearly a decade of deploying IBBS, the bank had purchased different types of hardware from multiple vendors.

As a result, standardization on Novell NetWare became difficult, and supporting the legacy IBBS application became a challenging task.

Moreover, IBBS was developed using Microfocus COBOL and designed to run in a 16-bit DOS environment. With poor support for the TCP/IP protocol stack, the NetWare servers running IBBS could not be integrated into the corporate network easily. Essentially, the NetWare servers functioned as branch file servers, without any data connectivity. Regular maintenance of different versions of IBBS across 1400 branches was a painstaking effort in the absence of network support. Patching, troubleshooting and version upgrades had to be conducted onsite. Branches in rural and remote areas were particularly difficult to access and required support personnel to travel frequently. Also, the availability of certified hardware on NetWare was limited, which made adding new machines difficult.

As Canara Bank's customer base expanded, its banking services began to scale, creating an immediate need for Internet Banking, Anywhere Banking (banking from any CanBank branch across the country) and an expanded ATM network. Novell NetWare's closed legacy environment did not allow room to accommodate these new technologies. Canara Bank had to purchase additional machines running Microsoft Windows to interface with these new technologies, which was extremely inefficient from a hardware utilization standpoint. New hardware and Microsoft Windows licenses strained budgets and made new technology projects difficult to scale and sustain.

When additional branches were added to the bank's network, procuring new servers that were certified to run on NetWare was difficult, as IHVs had ceased to provide support for older versions of the OS. Micro Focus had also ceased support for the COBOL version on which the IBBS package had been developed. A combination of all these factors made migration attractive.

Migrating the 1400 odd legacy NetWare servers posed another challenge: Canara Bank wanted to switch platforms but not hardware. Deploying the latest OS available, without going into a hardware refresh cycle that would cost millions of rupees was a challenging task. The bank had amassed about a dozen different types of machines after a decade of deploying IBBS. This heterogeneous mix of hardware that spanned across more than 1,000 servers and 10,000 desktops made the project very complex. Canara Bank began to look for a platform that could deliver the latest innovation along with complete hardware freedom.

"Besides the technical improvement to our operations, we also benefit from a bundled support system that gives us increased peace of mind above and beyond the enhancements within the IT infrastructure. Although the likelihood of problems with our web-based activity has been much reduced as a result of this solution, we know that professional, around-the-clock support is at hand should we require it."

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