HIKAL LTD.

HIKAL POWERS MISSION CRITICAL ERP PROJECT WITH RED HAT ENTERPRISE LINUX

FAST FACTS	
Industry:	Manufacturing
Challenges:	Use technology to reduce manufacturing costs. Integrate ERP with legacy infrastructure. Eliminate server compromises. Seamlessly migrate key legacy components to the latest platform
Solution:	Software: Red Hat Enterprise Linux, Oracle E business suite & Red Hat Cluster Suite
Benefits:	ERP project completed in a record time of under six months. Complete freedom to add multiple applications to infrastructure. Enterprise Linux & Red Hat Cluster Suite deliver continuous uptime with zero maintenance issues.

INTRODUCTION

A technology driven company, Hikal began its operations in 1988 and established itself as a dependable partner for high quality fine chemicals, safety and environmental protection.

Hikal is involved in custom synthesis and manufacturing of Active Pharmaceutical Ingredients (APIs), intermediates and crop protection products. It operates state-of-art manufacturing facilities in Maharashtra and Gujarat and an R&D center and API manufacturing facility in Bangalore. The plants are ISO 9000-2000, ISO 14001 and OHSAS 18001 certified.

In 2004, Hikal made its international presence by acquiring a majority stake in Marsing, a Denmark based API marketing and distribution company. Hikal is also building a new Contract Research facility in India, which will be operational by the end of 2006.

CHALLENGES

In the pharmaceuticals industry, solution providers need to maintain extensive control over their production processes, store functions and quality metrics, all of which involve harvesting large pools of data. As a public limited company (Hikal's shares are publicly traded on Bombay and National Stock Exchanges), the company's responsibility towards investors made adherence to regulatory standards all the more pertinent.

Hikal needed to manage its data effectively and minimize defects in production. The broad objectives prescribed by Hikal's management was to use technology to reduce inventory, improve customer delivery performance and reduce process cycles, while simultaneously bringing down manufacturing costs. Hikal also expected to better cost of compliance and resource utilization through standardized processes, and improve customer service with better controls. A company-wide ERP project, which could deliver complete automation to Hikal's plants and processes was initiated.

The choice of the right Operating System (OS) platform to host the ERP was important to ensure continuous availability of the applications. Moreover, the OS platform was expected to provide a high degree of freedom to allow seamless integration with Hikal's existing infrastructure.

Explains Falgun Shukla, Senior GM-IT, Hikal Ltd., "Sturdiness was an important factor in selecting the right platform to power our ERP project. We were looking for an OS that could deliver UNIX-like sturdiness coupled with a strong security framework, which would effectively eliminate any server compromises." Since Hikal was planning to use the ERP to both monitor and control production, the applications had to be integrated with the company's legacy control room modules. This is an area where few manufacturers had ventured before, making the project more complex from a long term perspective.

SOLUTION

In June 2004, after an extensive evaluation process for the right OS platform, Hikal decided to take the mission critical plunge with Linux by hosting the Oracle E business suite on Red Hat Enterprise Linux Advanced Server.

Falgun Shukla, explains, "We did an apples to apples comparison between various platforms and found UNIX to be much stronger than other similar systems. However, its proprietary nature would limit freedom and impose an expensive vendor lock-in. Moreover, UNIX being comparatively less user friendly would have made it very tedious to manage. Red Hat Enterprise Linux was the perfect balance as it combined the sturdiness of UNIX with a fair degree of user friendliness. It also had a clear performance & security edge over proprietary systems."

With six remote locations connecting to a central hub hosting the ERP, security and maintenance of servers were also key considerations in the choice of the OS. Since a massive investment was riding on the project, the performance of the OS was critical from a long term sustainability perspective. "Linux has built-in scalability and security features that protect our servers from being broken into and infected with viruses. Our Red Hat Enterprise Linux servers ensure high availability of ERP applications across all remote locations," adds Shukla.

Since the ERP project was initiated at a later stage, Hikal had to plan its automation project keeping in mind the legacy-overhaul involved. Four Red Hat Enterprise Linux servers power the Oracle 11i Apps system, running in a clustered mode through the Red Hat Cluster Suite. Two Enterprise Linux servers have been deployed in a production environment whereas the other two run as UAT Clones. With a fall back mechanism, Red Hat Cluster Suite ensures continuous availability of the Oracle ERP. "We have setup a clustered environment with failsafe redundancy, to ensure that our Linux infrastructure remains unbreakable," says Shukla. To allow its support staff to adopt Linux skills seamlessly, Hikal also availed of Red Hat's training courses.

BENEFITS

With its mission critical backend now completely powered by Red Hat Enterprise Linux, Hikal has experienced the strong value delivered by Open Source software. In a record time of six months after the project was initiated, Hikal had a full-fledged live ERP powerhouse well under their control, with all legacy systems integrated seamlessly to Red Hat Enterprise Linux servers running at the backend.

"The choice that an open standards platform like Red Hat Enterprise Linux provides is very beneficial from a long term perspective. For example, with Enterprise Linux, we now have complete freedom to add multiple applications to our infrastructure. We also have the flexibility to integrate our instrumentation OS (UNIX-based) to our ERP servers," explains Shukla.

Approximately 100 concurrent users access the ERP from locations across the country, and as Shukla describes,

"The Enterprise Linux servers have delivered continuous uptime with zero maintenance issues. For us, adapting to the Enterprise Linux technology has been as easy as plug and play."

FUTURE ROADMAP

Although Hikal's critical ERP project has successfully gone into production mode, the organization is now looking at extending technology to other areas of its operations as well. "We are seriously analyzing the potential of integrating and combining our business applications with a number of our subsidiaries.

This will help us automate and streamline processes on a national and global level," says Sameer Hiremath, Executive Director, Hikal Ltd. Keeping growing business strategies in mind, Hikal is confident that Linux will be able to scale proportionately. "Red Hat Enterprise Linux in particular offers excellent scalability for horizontal as well as vertical growth, as it is backed by professional services and consulting that match the needs of growing enterprises like ours," explains Shukla.

CONCLUSION

Hikal's mission critical automation project running on Red Hat Enterprise Linux is a testimony to the robustness, performance, scalability and security of the Linux operating system. Red Hat's commitment towards providing a single point of support for enterprise deployments coupled with the high reliability factor of Linux has given Hikal the required confidence to bank its entire business on the Open Source platform.

RED HAT SALES AND GENERAL INQUIRIES

Toll free numbers:

Europe, Middle East and Africa (EMEA)
00800 7334 2835

Turkey
00800 448 820 640
Israel
1809 449 548
UAE
80004449549

E-Mail:

europe@redhat.com

www.europe.redhat.com