

German media giant moves publishing beyond the page

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Hubert
Burda
Media

HP Integrity server infrastructure drives Internet innovations in customer relationships

The Internet is transforming publishing into a business that capitalizes on customer relationships, not just content. Traditional publishers are adopting Web-based processes to increase operational efficiency and create channels beyond books to reach and retain readers.

The German holding company Hubert Burda Media Group (HBM) began as a printing business more than a century ago. Today, the family-owned enterprise is a publishing empire that earns more than €1.5 billion in external sales and has 7,400 employees in 28 countries. Its venues include *Focus*, Germany's most widely read weekly newsmagazine, as well as blogs, gamer networks, and sites that engage readers in content creation.

An early Internet user and among the first buyers of SAP software, forward-looking HBM established a wholly owned subsidiary, Offenburg-based Burda Digital Systems

GmbH (www.burdadigital.de), to provide its IT services. Now, as its industry puts a premium on customer relationship management (CRM) and enterprise resource planning (ERP), HBM's decades of SAP experience are key to the fast growth of Burda Digital, which also serves outside publishing and printing firms. The subsidiary offers a full spectrum of Web-based CRM and ERP solutions, including implementation and management of customized portals, e-commerce environments, and data centers.

Burda Digital meets its clients' rapidly evolving requirements with an HP Virtual Server Environment based on the HP-UX 11i operating system. The platform employs HP Integrity servers equipped with Intel® Itanium® 2 processors.

"We implement and operate complex solutions for all HBM companies as well as external clients," says Wolfgang Wassmer, the HBM IT manager responsible for the Burda Digital data center. "As an independent profit center, we compete with other IT providers by delivering superior services in the most efficient way. With our HP Integrity environment, we are able to respond flexibly to the changing demands of our clients and offer high levels of availability, performance and efficiency."

Solutions for the adaptive enterprise.





Moving into the future with proven technology and service

Thirty years ago, HBM installed its first SAP systems on IBM mainframes. In 1996, seeking greater flexibility and return on investment, the company moved its SAP environment to AlphaServer systems running the Tru64 UNIX® operating system. "Since then, we've employed nearly the full range of this server family," says Mr. Wassmer, "most recently, an HP TruCluster configuration of AlphaServer GS160 systems. But in 2003, we faced another platform decision: We needed to expand computing resources, and HP had just introduced the Integrity platform."

Requiring next-generation performance and value, HBM rigorously assessed diverse server architectures, including those of IBM and HP. "After a thorough analysis," says Mr. Wassmer, "we chose HP Integrity servers, which offer superior flexibility, ease of migration and optimal performance for our evolving business needs."

Running HP-UX 11i, Linux®, and Microsoft® Windows® operating systems, Integrity servers enable companies to consolidate, unify, and virtualize these diverse environments on an industry-standard platform. And these scalable, high-performance servers had a proven track record. Backed by strong HP partnerships with software providers, Integrity servers were already running many large SAP installations.

HBM also valued the proven, high-caliber resources of HP Services. "Over many years, HP Services has been helping us satisfy our clients and meet ever-higher service level requirements," says Mr. Wassmer. "HP Services consultants are flexible and collaborative colleagues and

they know our business well. By choosing the Integrity architecture, we could continue our very good relationship with HP."

Streamlining collaboration for 3,000 users

HP Services consultants helped Burda Digital's IT staff to rapidly transfer its software to the new platform. The joint team used the HP Smooth Transition Process—a toolset, template, and procedures developed by HP and Oracle® to streamline the transfer of Tru64 UNIX-based Oracle databases to the HP-UX 11i operating system. "We moved six SAP production instances to the new platform in less than 36 hours," says Mr. Wassmer. "Without interrupting users, we raised our services to a higher level than we had ever provided in the past."

HP Services consultants also helped the Burda Digital IT team to plan, design, implement, and manage an HP-UX 11i environment that currently comprises two identical HP Serviceguard clusters. Each configuration contains two HP Integrity rx8620 Servers equipped with HP-UX Workload Manager software and an HP StorageWorks EVA5000 environment linked via SAN switches to the company's wider StorageWorks network. HP Services provides 24x7 support with guaranteed four-hour response under an HP Proactive Essentials service contract.

Installed in 2003, the first cluster runs 40 SAP instances, including 10 SAP R/3 production instances, two SAP Business Information Warehouse instances, and a portal based on SAP NetWeaver and SAP Enterprise Portal software. Added two years later, the second cluster runs a PeopleSoft CRM environment, a SAS data warehouse, an Oracle9i database, and a media archive based on the Digital Collections Asset Management System.

Together, the high-availability configurations allow up to 800 simultaneous users to access SAP R/3 services and enable 3,000 partners, employees, and customers to collaborate across sites, countries, and technologies, dramatically reducing search times and compressing workflows.

“Benchmarks show that we are providing very high service levels to our clients, who have faster access to applications and services,” says Mr. Wassmer. “Our users see better performance, better response times and higher availability.”

Fewer servers, higher productivity

Using the HP Virtual Server Environment, Burda creates hardware partitions among its servers and employs HP-UX Workload Manager and HP Serviceguard software to shift work among servers and maintain continuity during maintenance or in the event of failover. This real-time resource allocation also enables Burda Digital to meet short-term spikes in demand without buying surplus processing power that remains on idle standby.

The combination of more efficient hardware and virtualization enables the company to keep pace with users’ burgeoning data sets and applications while reducing its IT overheads. “The Integrity platform provides significantly higher performance per processor,” says Mr. Wassmer. “We’ve consolidated more than 40 AlphaServer systems with just four Integrity servers. And with virtualization, we achieve synergies of all kinds, including fast and flexible storage that extends to our Microsoft Windows and Red Hat Linux environments.”

Providing a total capacity of 12 terabytes, each cluster’s storage system also supports some of Burda Digital’s 116 HP ProLiant DL380 and DL580 Servers. Configured into an 86-server farm, most of these systems host client applications and data. The rest function as Microsoft Exchange, file, and print servers.

By consolidating and virtualizing IT, Burda Digital increases the productivity and agility of its IT resources while streamlining processes for end users. Burda Digital can rapidly and easily adapt its operations to changing business needs.

“Hubert Burda Media is focusing on Eastern Europe,” says Mr. Wassmer. “As its IT provider, we must develop services and applications for this rapidly growing market. We recently set up two large SAP projects in Moscow on our Integrity platform by simply adding new SAP instances to our existing Integrity environment.”

Building customer loyalty through service excellence

While transforming HBM into a media innovator, Burda Digital’s IT advances are also increasing its own competitiveness as an IT service provider. Hardware consolidation is just the start. Working with HP Services, Burda Digital plans to expand the reach of its HP Virtual



Server Environment and further increase efficiency and flexibility.

“Working with HP Services, we will continue to integrate new projects, services and applications on this platform,” says Mr. Wassmer. “With standardization, consolidation and virtualization, our data center will efficiently manage changing applications and business processes.”

Burda Digital is standardizing processes as well as technologies to build a data center as dynamic as its business. “Our goal is to provide high-quality services that keep us ahead of the competition,” says Mr. Wassmer. “HP Services is helping us to establish service level agreements that guarantee high service levels.

“Client relationships are the heart of our business,” concludes Mr. Wassmer. “Customer satisfaction is what sets us apart and we earn it by maintaining consistent, high-quality service. Our Burda Digital team and HP Services people have high regard for each others’ competence. Working with HP, we anticipate our future opportunities with confidence.”

Challenge

- Clients' CRM and ERP operations grow in size and complexity.
- Customers and competitors continuously raise service-level expectations.
- Media innovations spawn new business models and open new markets.
- IT must deliver better services to more users at lower cost.

Solution

- Two HP Serviceguard clusters, each comprising two HP Integrity rx8620 Servers with two HP Integrity rx2600 Servers for backup
- HP-UX 11i v2 operating system and HP Virtual Server Environment, including HP nPars hardware partitions and HP-UX Workload Manager
- SAP R/3 4.6C, SAP NetWeaver, SAP Enterprise Portal, SAP Business Information Warehouse, PeopleSoft software, a SAS data warehouse, a Digital Collections Asset Management archive, and an Oracle9i database
- HP StorageWorks EVA5000 storage system with 12 TB capacity, including StorageWorks SAN switches and ESL9595 tape libraries and VERITAS NetBackup Enterprise Server 5.1
- Red Hat Linux and Microsoft Windows environments based on 116 HP ProLiant DL380 and DL580 Servers
- HP Services consulting and HP Proactive Essentials service support
- HP Smooth Transition Process to transfer SAP instances onto new platform

Results

Simplicity

- Four Integrity servers do the work formerly performed by 40 servers.
- IT creates services by simply adding new SAP instances to the existing environment.

Agility

- The virtualized, standardized platform keeps pace with rapid growth and change.

Value

- 3,000 users obtain faster access to services, increasing productivity.
- Benchmarked gains in service quality and efficiency improve competitiveness.

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