



DICE CORPORATION IS SECURE USING RED HAT AND STEELEYE SOLUTIONS

FAST FACTS

Company	DICE Corporation
Industry	Security monitoring technology
Geography	Bay City, Michigan
Opportunity	Create a more stable and cost-effective portfolio of software products for security firms and expand its client base by migrating to Red Hat Enterprise Linux and SteelEye high-availability solutions.
Software	Red Hat Enterprise Linux, SteelEye LifeKeeper for Linux.
Benefits	Reduced costs and shorter IT support time to keep servers patched and available. Higher revenues due to client demand for a higher performing and more stable portfolio of applications.



BACKGROUND

DICE Corporation specializes in creating integrated central station monitoring software for the security industry. DICE's clients protect residences and businesses against intrusion, fire, flooding, and other manmade and natural disasters, and DICE's fully integrated software allows them to facilitate communications between their central station operators, billing personnel, service technicians, and salespeople. By leveraging the very latest technologies to build its products and services, DICE helps its clients generate new sources of recurring monthly revenue and optimize their businesses to run more efficiently and cost effectively. Founded in 1983, and based in Bay City, Michigan, DICE Corporation is privately held and global in scale, with clients on six continents.

OPPORTUNITY

Security companies typically monitor their clients' homes and businesses electronically by wiring the premises for intruders, fire, or other problems that could impact the safety of the inhabitants or property. When an alarm is triggered, the signal is relayed to the security company's central station operator, which immediately communicates the problem to local police, fire department, or other authorities. DICE Corp.'s on-premise software products – including its Central Station Automation, Backoffice Utilities, and Service Management applications – enable security companies' call centers and monitoring facilities to run smoothly and efficiently, and ensure that when a security problem is detected, that the correct action can be taken swiftly and effectively. DICE also provides full-time hosting of its applications for security firms that don't want to invest in or maintain their own IT infrastructure.

No matter whether a security firm owns its own DICE software, or has chosen to host its applications with DICE, the reliability of the applications is of utmost importance. "Uptime is key to our clients. They need to be up 24/7," said Steve Senk, hardware support manager for DICE Corporation. "If someone's house or business is on fire, our clients need to know about it and respond to it right away." DICE's ability to ensure that its software—both on-premise and Web-based—runs reliably is thus critical to both its clients' businesses as well as its own ability to be competitive in a tough market.

Prior to 2006, DICE's core software product ran on SCO Unix. But SCO's legal woes coupled with reliability and performance concerns motivated Senk's team to explore other options. Specifically, they wanted to move to Linux because of its promise of lower cost and higher stability. DICE began evaluating different versions of Linux to determine the best fit for its applications.

Complicating this process, however, was the fact that the high-availability solution that DICE used was not compatible with Linux. At the same time DICE was searching for a Linux platform, it also needed a high-availability provider that would work with Linux, and which could provide consulting and systems integration services to ensure the implementation was successful.

SOLUTION

After an exhaustive evaluation process, DICE decided to migrate its core applications to Red Hat Enterprise Linux. The primary reasons to choose Red Hat: cost and reliability.

"SCO Unix required a five-user license. If we had more users to add, the cost really escalated," said Senk. Also, because of redundancy issues, this would have meant buying licenses for two systems "which was quite expensive," he said. The legendary reliability of Red Hat Enterprise Linux was another reason to go that route, he said. "The stability of the Red Hat platform made it the obvious choice," he said.

To solve its high-availability challenge and help with the migration from SCO Unix to Red Hat Enterprise Linux, DICE turned to SteelEye Technology Inc., a Menlo Park, California-based provider of business continuity solutions that focus on data protection, data replication, and disaster recovery. SteelEye's products and professional services are designed to easily integrate into the most complex IT infrastructures on both a local and global scale. In particular, SteelEye's LifeKeeper for Linux is a software application that provides high-availability of clustered Linux systems by monitoring system and application health, client connectivity and delivering uninterrupted data access regardless of where clients reside—on the Internet, or a company's own intranet, or extranet.



BENEFITS

Since switching to Red Hat Enterprise Linux and adding LifeKeeper support, hundreds of clients have signed on for DICE's failover service, with more than 50 installations in place within DICE's facilities. "A really critical part of the success of the implementation came from being able to offer 24/7 uptime, 365 days a year," said Senk. Moreover, he said, the performance of the system has "accelerated significantly" since moving to Red Hat Enterprise Linux from SCO Unix.

"Not only is Red Hat Enterprise Linux affordable, but it is utterly reliable and stable compared to other versions of Linux."

**- Steve Senk,
hardware support manager,
DICE Corporation.**

On the Red Hat Enterprise Linux Platform, DICE's internal IT support team is also able to be much more efficient at patching. "With SCO Unix, we had to go out and download all the patches, upload them to our systems, re-link the kernel and reboot," said Senk. "And due to system redundancy, we had to multiply this by two for every server." With Red Hat Enterprise Linux, all this is eliminated. DICE estimates that DICE saves four man hours per server pair – and his team supports in the neighborhood of 300 servers. "This obviously saves us a great deal of time and money on support," said Senk.

Red Hat support has been exemplary. "We've called at odd hours, and still gotten excellent help with any issues," said Senk. Additionally, DICE runs a help desk for its clients. Not only have the support calls from clients has gone down, but fixing any issues that do arise is "much easier," said Senk.

Best of all, DICE's client base didn't experience any disruption. "For our clients, the transition to SteelEye was completely transparent," said Senk. "Performance improved, they appreciated that, and it was business as usual for them."

Still, the biggest benefit by far has been the stability of the platform. "We had problems in the past with the SCO kernel locking up," he said. "The fact that I can completely depend on Red Hat Enterprise Linux is huge. And since we're the ones who get the phone calls when things go wrong, that means we sleep better at night."



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