Hotelplan Group saves on licensing costs for core SAP systems with Red Hat

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Hotelplan

Hotelplan Group, an international travel and tourism company based in Switzerland, wanted to save money and modernize its core IT environment by migrating its SAP systems from costly UNIX platforms and legacy servers. By switching to Red Hat Enterprise Linux and SAP HANA, supported by Red Hat Satellite and running on x86-based hardware, Hotelplan Group gained cost-effective performance improvements that improve data accuracy for travelers and agencies. With enterprise open source software from Red Hat, the company has reduced annual licensing costs for its core IT environment.

Software

Red Hat® Enterprise Linux®
for SAP® Solutions

Red Hat Satellite

Partner

SAP

HPE

Glattbrugg, Switzerland ●

Headquarters

Travel and tourism

300 locations worldwide

Benefits

▸ Cut server provisioning from two days to two hours

▸ Achieved higher data refresh rate to ensure user information is up-to-date and accurate

▸ Significantly reduced licensing costs

"In the travel business, if you do an availability or price request, you often get answers from cached data. The more performance resources we have, the more often we can refresh those caches, improving service quality."

—

Heini Kalt
Chief Technology Officer,
Hotelplan Group

Modernizing legacy UNIX systems

Founded in 1935, Hotelplan Group is an international tourism and travel business with subsidiaries in Switzerland, the United Kingdom, Germany, and other European countries. Hotelplan Group is responsible for the main functions of the company, including strategy, finance, and IT. Its IT department of around 100 staff provides support for more than 3,300 users at 300 locations worldwide.

Hotelplan used SAP software for its main business systems, supporting functions such as holiday rental booking, tours, and travel agency operations. This software ran on the UNIX-based HP-UX Itanium servers and several instances of Oracle Database, a proprietary solution for online transaction processing, data warehousing, and mixed database workloads.

However, when its Itanium hardware neared end-of-life, Hotelplan Group decided to find a more cost effective, innovative solution that would help it stay competitive in the increasingly crowded and price-sensitive travel market.

"Our HP-UX Itanium hardware was proving very costly, especially maintenance costs," said Heini Kalt, Chief Technology Officer (CTO) at Hotelplan Group. "And there had not been much development recently."

After deciding to migrate its SAP environment to modern, x86-based Hewlett Packard Enterprise (HPE) Synergy servers, Hotelplan sought to also find a less costly, more flexible alternative to Oracle Database.

Migrating core systems to Linux

To find a new operating system for its SAP environment, Hotelplan Group evaluated two SAP-supported Linux platforms, SUSE and Red Hat, before deciding to deploy Red Hat Enterprise Linux for SAP Solutions, managed by Red Hat Satellite.

"We chose Red Hat over SUSE because we were very familiar with the platform and already comfortable with CentOS, which we used for other applications," said Kalt. "The path from CentOS to Red Hat was very smooth, with no major differences."

During its initial migration from legacy Itanium machines to its new HPE x86 servers running Red Hat Enterprise Linux, Hotelplan Group also decided to migrate its SAP environment to SAP HANA to gain further cost and performance benefits.

"We considered completing the migration to x86-based hardware first, then moving to SAP HANA later, but migration in two phases would have required twice the downtime and testing effort," said Kalt.

Hotelplan Group now uses SAP HANA and Red Hat Enterprise Linux—running on HPE servers in two datacenters—to support and manage its core IT systems and functions, including standard SAP bookkeeping and business warehouse modules, as well as applications developed in-house: a travel agency solution, a tour operating system, and a holiday rental solution. This environment also provides a back-end for the web applications that provide real-time availability information to Hotelplan Group's public website, used by customers to book accommodations, tours, and other travel-related reservations.

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> Chief Technology Officer,
> Hotelplan Group

Offering fast, highly available applications for agents and travelers

Efficient platform management

Simplifying and automating its IT environment with a familiar core technology has helped Hotelplan Group adopt a new operating system for its SAP environment without extended onboarding needed to learn optimal management practices. "We found Red Hat Enterprise Linux easy to use because the handling and commands are so similar to CentOS, and it's not too different from our old operating system. And Red Hat's support responses have been very fast when we need assistance," said Kalt.

Managing this new environment with Red Hat Satellite—and support from Red Hat's technical experts—has helped Hotelplan Group quickly resolve issues and make updates to meet resource needs for business teams.

"With Satellite, we can use one tool to manage patches, licensing, and registration for our entire environment, and it's compatible with the Puppet modules we use to distribute configuration files," said Kalt. "Setting up a new server, for example, used to take us two days, and with Satellite it takes only two hours. We can now provide new application servers for the business much more quickly, so they can make changes faster."

Stable, enterprise-ready technology also helps the company minimize risk of downtime or outages for its internal and customer-facing systems. "We can run the same Red Hat Enterprise Linux 7.4 release, without having to upgrade the Linux kernel, for at least four years," said Kalt. "The stability from less frequent major updates reduces risk—a really big benefit, because we have to be online 24x7. With the SAP variant of Red Hat Enterprise Linux, we also gain access to a repository that ensures we have the right patches for the HANA platform."

Accurate data for customer applications

By migrating from UNIX to Linux, Hotelplan Group has reduced its SAP servers from 25 to 15—with better performance that supports SAP HANA's in-memory technology.

"Due to Red Hat, we've been able to move to better x86-based hardware. We now have 600% more CPU cores and about 1000% more RAM," said Kalt.

As a result, users of Hotelplan Group's applications gain more accurate, up-to-date information on availability and options to inform their travel planning and booking.

"In the travel business, if you do an availability or price request, you often get answers from cached data. The more performance resources we have, the more often we can refresh those caches, improving service quality for the more than 3,300 users between Hotelplan Group and our travel agency partners," said Kalt.

Lower licensing and hardware costs

Migrating to Red Hat Enterprise Linux has also helped Hotelplan Group improve its licensing and hardware costs.

"By migrating to SAP HANA and Red Hat software, we save money," said Kalt. "The HANA licensing cost is included in our main SAP license, with some additional spend."

The company has also saved by switching to an operating system that is compatible with industry standard hardware. "By moving to Red Hat, we have also been able to move to more cost-effective, x86-based servers," said Kalt. "We achieve higher performance with fewer servers, reducing our costs for licensing, power, and cooling."

Supporting a strategy of continued growth

With its SAP HANA and Red Hat environment successfully established, Hotelplan Group's IT team is ready to support the group's current and future business. To continue to improve performance, the team is adding more batch processing and new applications that take full advantage of SAP HANA in-memory technology. The company's developers are also currently evaluating Red Hat Ansible® Tower, an automation solution that could support further productivity improvements.

"Throughout the project, we have had a very collaborative relationship with Red Hat," said Kalt. "Hotelplan Group's strategy is growth, and we will support our strategy by adding more computing power, more memory, and more Red Hat subscriptions."

About the Hotelplan Group

The Hotelplan Group is an international tourism and travel business, with subsidiaries in Switzerland, the UK, Germany, and other countries. The business unit Hotelplan Suisse is the country's largest tour operator, with 900 employees.

About Red Hat Innovators in the Open

Innovation is the core of open source. Red Hat customers use open source technologies to change not only their own organizations, but also entire industries and markets. Red Hat Innovators in the Open proudly showcases how our customers use enterprise open source solutions to solve their toughest business challenges. Want to share your story? Learn more.

About Red Hat

Red Hat is the world's leading provider of enterprise open source software solutions, using a community-powered approach to deliver reliable and high-performing Linux, hybrid cloud, container, and Kubernetes technologies. Red Hat helps customers develop cloud-native applications, integrate existing and new IT applications, and automate and manage complex environments. A trusted adviser to the Fortune 500, Red Hat provides award-winning support, training, and consulting services that bring the benefits of open innovation to any industry. Red Hat is a connective hub in a global network of enterprises, partners, and communities, helping organizations grow, transform, and prepare for the digital future.

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