Interior spaces come to life with HP mission-critical technology

Depa Ltd. boosts ERP performance and availability to 1,900 end users with HP ProLiant and mission-critical Integrity server blades and saves 50 percent on storage solutions and networking hardware with HP BladeSystem connectivity and HP StorageWorks enterprise virtual arrays.

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Shafeek Rahman, IT Manager, Data Center, Depa Ltd.

Objective
Build a simplified scalable infrastructure that enables a worldwide high availability of ERP systems to meet the challenges of massive growth and be aligned with the corporate strategy

Approach
Design a tightly integrated, modular architecture of server, storage, and software to maximize performance and reliability of Oracle E-Business Suite while realizing administrative benefits with HP remote management tools

IT improvements
• 100% availability and zero downtime in more than two years since deployment boosts business continuity
• 20% reduction in server administration time reclaims productivity for IT staff
• Simplified management of Fibre Channel and iSCSI SAN fabrics in one SAN

Business benefits
• 50% reduction in cost of network connectivity hardware and cabling
• 50% cost avoidance by deploying one flexible SAN instead of two
• 100% continuous uptime with mission-critical HP Integrity blades
• Faster and more reliable ERP performance

Defining interior spaces
Construction booms come and go. During the past decade, radical, landscape-changing developments have sprouted in India, Singapore, and the United Arab Emirates, creating massive opportunities for office, retail, and residential buyers. But before the millions of square footage can become anything, the interior contractors have to make those spaces inhabitable, functional, and unique.

Based in Dubai, Depa Ltd. is the world’s largest interior contractor, providing interior contracting services for luxury hotels, residential apartments, metros, airports and even yachts. From opulent gathering places to intimate living spaces, Depa has amassed the intelligence, resources, and skill to bring just about any interior project to life.
Managing projects in Europe, Asia, Africa, and the Middle East takes massive purchasing power, tight organizational integration, and economies of scale that make Depa’s projects valuable as well as profitable. The business has succeeded in delivering quality on a large scale and has reaped the benefits: Depa has grown 10-fold in the past 10 years, organically and through mergers and acquisitions.

Getting resources on site on time
Delivering those projects on time and within budget means Depa relies heavily on enterprise resource planning (ERP) systems. With its recent exponential growth spurt, the company’s IT leaders were looking to improve Depa’s ERP profile. “The IT department’s main duty is to enable our growth to occur seamlessly,” explains Mohammed Khaiata, IT manager, strategy at Depa. “It’s our job to make sure that the IT infrastructure is scalable, available, and reliable to support that growth and to serve all the needs of this volume of transactions around the world.”

To support its rapid growth, Depa’s IT team had been deploying new servers. “We have grown rapidly, and accordingly, the IT department was growing tremendously,” Khaiata says. “We ended up growing our server footprint three-fold, scaling up to 40 rack-mounted servers all around the globe.”

The IT team made a five-year plan to implement a consolidated, more reliable, and highly available ERP system that would support the company’s 1,900 active users worldwide. “We needed a system that would be accessible at anytime from anywhere with no downtime, and that would provide top performance for our end users,” Khaiata says.

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Mohammed Khaiata, IT Manager, Strategy, Depa Ltd.

It would lay the foundation for future expansion. “Our main objective was to have a converged, simplified, and scalable infrastructure of servers, storage, and networking that will be aligned with our growth strategy and deliver an uncompromised performance with high availability of our systems,” adds Khaiata.
Scalability to the rescue

In 2008, the IT department deployed Oracle E-Business Suite on two enclosures of HP ProLiant BL460c and BL480c server blades as well as HP Integrity BL860c and BL870c server blades, and the data is stored on an HP StorageWorks 4400 Enterprise Virtual Array (EVA). The solution was certified by Oracle and HP partner Wipro, an IT and business consulting systems integrator.

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“Considering our recent growth pattern and the potential for future growth, we wanted the most beneficial solution in terms of storage, power and cooling requirements, and scalability,” Khaiata recalls. “After many cycles of evaluations, we decided to build our ERP infrastructure on HP BladeSystem portfolio products because they were the best fit for Depa.”

Offering Depa 2.5 times the compute density available in traditional rack-mounted servers, HP Integrity BL870c server blades with Intel® Itanium® 9300 Series Processors also give the group the flexibility of mission-critical 64-bit performance and continuous availability in an HP BladeSystem c7000 enclosure.

HP ProLiant BL460c and BL480c server blades function as the company’s application servers, fulfilling production, staging, testing, training, and development needs.

Saving 50 percent on networking costs

With connectivity and networking options available at the enclosure level, Khaiata and team were able to significantly reduce the networking hardware and cabling necessary to connect to SAN and LAN destinations.

“In order to have high availability with our previous rack server environment, we needed at least two connections from each server to our network and Fibre Channel storage,” recalls Shafeek Rahman, IT manager of data center at Depa. “The HP BladeSystem met our infrastructure design requirements and provided us the ability to achieve the redundancy through the I/O infrastructure with a single cable connected to storage and network. Moreover, it helped us reduce network complexity and cost by 50 percent.”

There were other benefits, Rahman adds. “The Depa IT team was able to achieve its infrastructure design requirements through the converged infrastructure of servers, storage, and networking offered by HP BladeSystem. It brought simplification and savings, and also resulted in improved performance. We’ve reduced costs while actually boosting the availability of our ERP system,” he explains.

Down with downtime

In order to leverage the organizational ability, purchasing power, and economies of scale Depa needs to meet client requirements worldwide, its ERP systems must be available 24x7. Helping to manage its supply chain without downtime, HP Integrated Lights-Out 2 (iLO 2) allows the Depa IT team to administer the HP server blades remotely from a single console. “Whenever we need to install a new operating system, update firmware, or configure our servers, we do it with HP remote management tools,” Rahman says. “Using iLO to manage our HP BladeSystem environment, we’ve reduced our server administration time by 20 percent.”

Since bringing the new Oracle-based ERP system online on HP mission-critical hardware, Depa has experienced the reliability it originally projected in its five-year plan. “Our design required high availability, and we were able to reduce the unplanned downtime to zero percent through HP Integrity server blade technology,” Rahman explains.
Simplifying a complex storage network

In order to provide the maximum performance for its Oracle E-Business Suite, Depa chose HP StorageWorks 4400 Enterprise Virtual Arrays. The solution was certified by Wipro as an industry-tested high-availability platform offering tight integration between software, servers, and storage. Combined with the HP BladeSystem, the StorageWorks EVA4400 provides a complete solution, allowing simplified management of storage and servers.

But Depa’s IT team knew it needed a storage area network (SAN) that would meet a complex set of needs. “Oracle has unique RAID requirements, and our other systems have different specifications, so we had a plan to deploy two different SANs,” recalls Rahman.

Realizing 50 percent cost avoidance with HP StorageWorks

Because HP EVA storage area networks can be configured as Fibre Channel or iSCSI targets or both, Depa could maximize its SAN for its own specific needs, and realize savings by deploying a single SAN.

“With the EVA4400, we can actually grow our SAN to eight enclosures—we only have three so far—and divide it up between Fibre Channel and iSCSI to meet our current and future needs” Rahman explains. “We’re saving about 50 percent on storage by staying with a flexible, scalable StorageWorks EVA4400 instead of deploying two separate storage networks.”

Management is also easier. “We’re using HP StorageWorks Command View EVA Software as a single console to manage the storage for all the HP server blades,” notes Rahman. “This has simplified administration and reduced management time considerably.”

The ERP deployment has been a resounding success for Depa, delivering high availability, high performance, and zero downtime. To its customers, suppliers, and field workers, it means the company can meet its promise of interior contracting excellence under tight deadlines.

As it continues to grow organically or through acquisitions and mergers, Depa is able to move forward with confidence, knowing its mission-critical enterprise resource planning systems are built for whatever the future may bring. “Now we have a highly reliable infrastructure that can match the growth we’re experiencing and is aligned with our business strategy,” relates Depa’s Mohammed Khaiata. “What we planned initially has become reality and the system has met our performance projections.”