CASE STUDY

Intel® Itanium® processor 9000 series

Enterprise Server
Mission-Critical Computing
Automation & Cost-saving in the Cloud
Performance for Data-Intensive Computing
Virtualization

High-Performance Solutions for Happy Travelers

Hotelplan Group upgrades to Intel® Itanium® processor 9000 series for enhanced reliability and cloud-ready capabilities

The Hotelplan Group owns a range of travel and tourism companies that specialize in vacation packages including adventure holidays, skiing, and luxury breaks. The Group has subsidiaries across Europe, with operations in the UK, Italy, Russia and Switzerland, and is committed to delivering customers exceptional service and choice.

GROUP Hotelplan

"The Intel® Itanium® processor 9000 series works with our virtualization layer to allow us to use our server farm as a private cloud. This gives us the flexibility to allocate processor power to the changing demands of our applications on-demand and ensures we are always using our resources most efficiently."

Heini Kalt,
Director ICT Infrastructure,
Hotelplan Group

CHALLENGES

- **Great service.** Enable subsidiaries to provide top-quality service to customers by using the strongest IT tools
- **Support complexity.** Ensure its mix of mission-critical applications and back-office programs is fully supported for optimum performance
- **Cloud-friendly.** Support the Group's plans to equip users with access to all core applications through the cloud with a highly flexible and reliable, consolidated platform

SOLUTIONS

- **Upgrade system.** Move to the latest generation Intel® Itanium® processor 9000 series for enhanced performance
- **Smooth migration.** Upgrade was completed with minimal downtime and no impact on productivity

IMPACT

- **Strong Return on Investment.** Expected within two years through increased performance and 42 percent operating cost reduction
- **Improved productivity.** Operational tasks are more efficient, with batch processing time down by 58 percent and response times for dialogue and Web requests cut by 25 percent
- **Enhanced virtualization.** Greater flexibility means resources are allocated or created on-demand for faster response to customer requests
- **Fast and efficient.** Hotelplan Group can provision new systems within two hours rather than days or weeks

A Demanding Application Suite

The travel companies in the Hotelplan Group put a lot of effort into making sure their customers have the most relaxing and enjoyable holidays possible. To support the thousands of bookings and transactions they handle every year and ensure the highest quality of service, the Group has a roadmap in place for continuous IT enhancement.

Over the last decade, the Group has implemented a number of innovative applications to handle its customer interactions, all hosted at its data center in Switzerland. It began by building its own tailored travel retail solution, called HIT*, and followed this by adding a tour operating module called MYTHOS* to the software suite. A few years later, it implemented iRent*, a new solution for operating its rental home business, to complete its set of core business applications. These programs are used by 122 of the Group's own travel agencies as well as 100 independent partner agencies across Switzerland.

This increasingly complex suite of SAP*-based applications requires an ever-growing amount of processor power to keep them running. The Group also relied on the HP-UX* platform that supported these mission-critical programs to underpin various back-office solutions, Oracle* databases, SAP business intelligence, and content management platforms. Furthermore, as Hotelplan continues to grow its business – data volumes increased ten-fold in a single year – it is becoming an always-on enterprise needing to operate 24x7.

Fast-growing travel provider boosts operating efficiency with Intel® Itanium® processor 9000 series

These demands would challenge any IT environment and the Group must meet them as cost-effectively as possible. "Our platform is accessed by about 2,000 internal users across 30 countries, plus some 1,000 travel agencies and customers through our B2B and B2C channels," says Heini Kalt, director ICT Infrastructure, Hotelplan Group. "We need to ensure they can access the information and content they need to carry out their roles efficiently and – more importantly – to deliver a smooth and quick experience for our customers. Our ultimate goal is to provide users with cloud-based access to all our applications as economically as possible."

A Proven Track Record

The Group was already an Intel customer after using PCs powered by Intel® technology for over 20 years. It had also migrated its core applications from an HP-RISC* environment to one powered by Intel Itanium processors for the performance and cost efficiency benefits.

Having already seen the strong improvements Intel® architecture brought to its operations, the Group chose to migrate its SAP and Oracle environments to HP Integrity* BL870c i2 Server Blades with HP-UX 11i v3, powered by the latest generation Intel Itanium processor 9000 series.

"We felt very comfortable upgrading to the latest Intel Itanium processor, not just for the high performance capabilities it would bring but also due to the smooth migration that it promised," recalls Kalt. "Our internal application engineers are occupied with business needs and don't have time to spare on complicated technical migration. At the same time, however, we have to ensure that the availability and responsiveness of our core applications are not disrupted."

It was the combined possibility of carrying out the migration with no significant downtime and achieving compelling price-performance once it was complete that convinced the Group to upgrade its Intel Itanium processor-based platform. Indeed, the migration was completed smoothly, with little to no downtime.

Performing Better

"We estimate that we'll achieve ROI from this migration within three years," predicts Kalt, "which makes it more cost-efficient than our previous, older platform." The system has reduced the organization's IT-related energy costs and overall cost of operation for its IT platform is down by 10 percent.

Many of the Group's basic operational tasks have become much simpler and faster thanks to the robust performance of the latest Intel Itanium processor 9000 series. For example, batch package generation, which must be run every weekend, used to take around four days to fully complete and had a negative impact on the productivity of the Group's online business. Now the massive parallel processing capabilities of the Intel® technology mean that batches can be completed in less than 40 hours – a reduction of 58 percent – with no impact on the online business. Meanwhile, response times for dialogue and Web requests are down by 25 percent.

"The stronger CPUs work with our virtualization layer to allow us to use our server farm as a private cloud," Kalt explains. "This gives us the flexibility to allocate processor power to the changing needs of our applications on-demand and ensures we are always using our resources most efficiently. We can provision new systems faster now too. In the past, creating a new SAP system was a matter of days or even weeks. But today we are able to set up a completely new SAP environment within two hours."

Spotlight on Hotelplan Group

The Swiss-based Hotelplan Group operates a number of business units across Europe including Hotelplan Suisse (MTCH AG), Hotelplan Italia S.p.A., Hotelplan UK Group Ltd., Ascent Travel Int. Ltd., Interhome AG, and Travelwindow AG. It operates 122 travel agencies across the region and partners with a further 800 agencies in Switzerland and around 1,000 more in the UK and Italy.

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