



Database software developer boosts performance

High performance database developer in Germany completes tests around 80 per cent faster with standardised IT



“We can run more software tests using virtualized Dell PowerEdge blade servers. Tests that took up to a week can be done in about a day, helping us drive product development.”

Andreas Kloess, IT Director, Versant

Customer profile

VERSANT

Company Versant
Industry Technology
Country Germany
Employees 100
Website www.versant.com

Business need

Versant wanted to move to an infrastructure based on open standards. The firm looked for reliable, flexible technology to help it develop high performance database software.

Solution

It began partnering with Dell and deployed a number of solutions, including virtualized Dell™ PowerEdge™ blade servers and Dell EqualLogic storage area networks.

Benefits

- Company drives development, completing tests around 80 per cent faster
- Versant supports expansion with blade server technology
- IT team improves services, installing servers around 96 per cent quicker
- Versant ensures fast data transfer with 10-gigabit I/O ports
- Customer gains high-speed storage with 10-gigabit links

Solution areas

- Consultancy Services
- Server Solutions
- Storage Solutions
- Support Services
- Virtualization

Versant is an industry leader in specialised data management software. The Versant Database Engine helps customers cut hardware costs, increase speed and simplify development. It also enables companies to reduce administration costs significantly, and deliver products with a strong competitive edge.

Today, there are more than 150,000 installations of Versant software worldwide and the company has been a partner for Forbes Global 2000 companies – such as Ericsson, Verizon and Siemens – for more than 15 years.

The organisation has two main sites – one in California, United States, and another in Hamburg, Germany. The site in Germany is at the heart of the company's software development processes. It's where the firm has built a powerful datacentre and IT experts develop and test new Versant products before they're released worldwide.

As the company became more successful, it expanded its IT infrastructure, adding servers and directly attached storage to deliver extra performance and capacity. Andreas Kloess, IT Director at Versant, says: "We had a heterogeneous server infrastructure, so we faced many management and scalability challenges. We wanted to move to a standardised infrastructure that was reliable and flexible, and could support high-performance database software."

Customer gains one-stop shop for standardising IT

Versant decided to standardise its Hamburg datacentre on Dell solutions. The combination of scalability and performance made it the right choice for high performance database software. Versant and Dell developed a close working relationship, embarking on a programme of replacing end-of-lifecycle servers with Dell technology. Kloess says: "It made business sense to standardise on Dell because it's a one-stop shop for solutions and services. With our direct links to Dell, we always gained responsive support."

Versant supports growth with blade server technology

With Dell's help, Versant successfully moved to blade server technology. "We doubled the size of our IT infrastructure within the space of five years," says Kloess. "Nevertheless, we were able to meet this rate of expansion by adopting a Dell PowerEdge blade server solution – creating a highly consolidated, powerful datacentre."

Thanks to its relationship with Dell, Versant quickly found the right blade server solution to meet its needs. Its Dell account team recommended the Dell™ PowerEdge™ M610 blade server with Intel® Xeon® processors 5600 series to support development and testing processes.

"We can install servers around 96 per cent quicker with our virtualized Dell solution. It enables us to deliver a more responsive level of service to the company."

Andreas Kloess, IT Director, Versant

Technology in practice

Services

Dell Consultancy Services
– Virtualization Readiness Assessment (VRA)

Dell Support Services
– Dell ProSupport™ with Mission Critical

Hardware

Dell™ PowerEdge™ M610 blade servers with Intel® Xeon® processors 5600 series

Dell PowerEdge M1000e modular blade enclosures

Dell EqualLogic PS6010X and PS6000X storage area networks

Software

VMware® vSphere™
– VMware ESX

“With the Dell blade server’s enhanced memory capacity for I/O-intensive applications and energy efficiency, the technology would provide excellent support for continued expansion,” says Kloess.

IT drives product development – completing tests around 80 per cent faster

Today, the company has 20 blade servers, housed in two Dell PowerEdge M1000e modular blade enclosures. Kloess says: “We saw that Dell blade technology formed a comprehensive package, delivering great processing performance in a relatively small space.” The performance of the servers and the FlexIO technology in the blade server chassis offers Versant a key advantage. It allows the company to scale I/O application bandwidth up to 10-gigabits – fast enough to improve the speed of development. “We can run more software tests using virtualized Dell PowerEdge blade servers. Tests that took up to a week can be done in about a day, helping us drive product development,” says Kloess.

Comprehensive assessment simplifies virtualization

With the blade server infrastructure in place, Versant looked to virtualize the environment to maximise performance and increase scalability. The Dell Consulting team completed a Virtualization Readiness Assessment (VRA) of the servers to help Versant plan the rollout of the technology. Kloess says: “I soon gained an insight into the number of virtual machines we could deploy and the applications we could virtualize through our work with Dell.” The Versant IT team then virtualized the infrastructure with VMware® vSphere™ server software, using VMware ESX as the hypervisor technology. Currently, it has around 200 virtual machines, running mostly development and test applications.

IT team improves services, installing servers around 96 per cent faster

Since virtualizing the infrastructure, the company has significantly reduced the time for provisioning new servers.

In the past, it often took a couple of weeks to deploy one or two servers, but now the IT team can roll out as many as 60 servers in the same period. “We can install servers around 96 per cent quicker with our virtualized Dell solution. It enables us to deliver a more responsive level of service to the company,” says Kloess.

Aside from faster deployment, server utilisation and load balancing have also improved. When tests were completed only on dedicated servers, the machines were sometimes dormant because they weren’t required. But with virtualization, the physical machines support multiple virtual servers, maximising utilisation. Kloess adds: “Utilisation and load balancing are significantly improved. With our virtualized Dell solution, we can distribute capacity much more effectively.”

Customer gains high-speed storage with 10-gigabit links

To support the servers, Versant implemented Dell EqualLogic PS6010X and PS6000X storage area networks (SANs). The storage technology – which integrates tightly with VMware – is designed to deliver cost-effective storage for virtualized server environments. Like the servers, the Dell EqualLogic SANs support greater performance, rapid scalability and simplified management. In addition, the PS6010X SANs’s 10-gigabit Ethernet-based connectivity gives Versant the speed to support its high-performance database solutions. As a result, the company uses the 10-gigabit Dell EqualLogic SANs for build and test cycles and the 1-gigabit Dell EqualLogic SANs for quality control data. Kloess says: “A major advantage of Dell EqualLogic SAN technology is its 10-gigabit connectivity. It delivers the performance to support our most I/O-intensive systems. We can also scale storage on demand – giving us the same level of flexibility as we have with our servers. Scaling our Dell solution is incredibly simple.”



IT team deploys efficient SANs with performance similar to Fibre Channel

Versant has also reduced the costs of its storage by adopting an iSCSI-based solution from Dell. Based on his past experience, Kloess knew Fibre-Channel technology would be more expensive to run and time consuming to manage than the Dell EqualLogic environment. He says: "Just two members of staff are needed to operate our iSCSI Dell solution, which is easy to scale. They can complete routine tasks quicker, leaving time to focus on higher value projects."

Versant maximises IT performance with responsive support

To protect its investment, the customer selected Dell ProSupport™ with Mission Critical, providing four-hour onsite support. With this level of assistance, Versant avoids expensive downtime, using emergency dispatch and phone-based troubleshooting to maximise uptime. "When it comes to critical support, Dell is great. Dell ProSupport understands the importance of resolving issues fast," says Kloess.

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