IBM

Business challenge

Financial institutions rely on Celero to deliver top-notch technology solutions. How could Celero ensure high performance and availability for mission-critical systems without breaking the bank?

Transformation

Celero upgraded to cutting-edge IBM server and storage solutions to ensure high performance and round-the-clock availability for key banking systems and Oracle databases. Today, the company can continue to deliver top-quality service to demanding financial services clients, with more than 99.99 percent uptime, top performance and high operational efficiency.

Business benefits:

30%
reduction in monthly IT leasing costs

10-times
improvement in Oracle database response times

25-30%
improvement in teller-level and internet banking transactions for clients

Celero
Serving financial services clients better with 10-times faster Oracle database performance

Founded in 2003, Celero provides IT solutions for Canadian credit unions and financial institutions. The company employs more than 265 people, and operates from locations in Calgary, Regina, Saskatoon and Winnipeg.

"Upgrading to IBM POWER8™ has been a huge step up. We can process and deliver data to the business faster than ever before."

—Dale McGowan, Enterprise Architect, Celero

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Meeting high expectations

Celero provides end-to-end technology solutions and services to hundreds of financial institutions across Canada. For these clients, always-on availability and fast response times are key to delivering a superior service for their demanding end-customers.

Dale McGowan, Enterprise Architect at Celero, elaborates: "Our financial services clients operate in a very fast-paced sector and have very high expectations for our services."

A major part of Celero's business involves hosting key banking systems, including a flagship core solution based on DNA. To deliver the high levels of performance needed to support this solution landscape, Celero relies on Oracle databases running on IBM Power Systems servers.

David Kornell, IT Architect at Celero, comments: "Running Oracle databases on IBM Power® servers gives us the solid foundation we need to support core banking systems. As much of our existing infrastructure was nearing end-of-life, we wanted to upgrade to the latest-generation technology in order to guarantee the smooth running of key business systems and associated databases well into the future.

"A hardware refresh would allow us to take advantage of better performance and increased scalability, which would be key to helping us deliver top-quality service to clients even as our business continued to grow."

"Moving to IBM FlashSystem storage has been a game-changer for us—performance is better than ever and we can complete data backups 50 to 60 percent faster than before."

Dale McGowan, Enterprise Architect, Celero

Trusting in IBM technology

Working with IBM Global Technology Services®, Celero designed and implemented a new IT infrastructure. IBM Global Technology Services provided complete set-up and implementation services during the migration, bringing the new environment to full application-ready state.

Celero upgraded from IBM POWER6® systems to IBM Power System S822 servers, running the IBM AIX® operating system and virtualized with IBM PowerVM® software.

Dale McGowan remarks: "We believe that that IBM Power Systems platform offers the best performance for Oracle databases. Upgrading to IBM POWER8™ processor technology has been a huge step up. We've practically doubled per-core performance and can now draw on up to 4.5 TB of memory. These enhancements mean we can process and deliver data to the business faster than ever before."

To complement its new server landscape, Celero introduced IBM FlashSystem 840 and IBM XIV solutions to deliver high performance and reliability for demanding enterprise storage workloads. With support from IBM Global Technology Services, the company migrated 325 TB of data to the new storage environment.

Dale McGowan continues: "Moving to IBM FlashSystem storage has been a game-changer for us—performance is better than ever and we can complete data backups 50 to 60 percent faster than before.

"While we have always been able to complete backups within our established overnight window, the process was pretty tight during busy times, especially at month-end. Now, thanks to the combination of super-fast hardware and an upgraded backup environment, there is a high degree of confidence that online availability SLAs will be met."

Outstanding availability

Celero has deployed the new IBM server and storage systems in a mirrored configuration: one set of systems is housed at a company datacenter in Calgary, and the other at a datacenter in Winnipeg.

To maximize uptime for these vital systems, Celero has established a high-availability cluster environment using IBM PowerHA®. In the unlikely event that its primary system fails, the company will be able to seamlessly fail over to a secondary environment, avoiding the need to invoke a disaster recovery scenario.

David Kornell notes: "A clustered configuration allows us to avoid single points of failure and maximize uptime for mission-critical banking systems. With IBM solutions, we can deliver greater than 99.995 percent availability for key applications and data, helping us maintain excellent service levels."

In its disaster recovery environment, Celero is in the process of establishing a redundant global mirroring link, with six links, which will be capable of supporting 1 GBPS throughput.

Partnering up for better-managed IT

By engaging with IBM Global Financing, Celero was able to negotiate a new cost-effective, 42-month lease for the new infrastructure of which the first six months were designed with zero-dollar payments.

The IBM Global Financing agreement offered a better match to Celero's budget and a lower cost profile, reducing monthly payments by approximately 30 percent when compared with the company's previous contract.

Today, IBM Global Technology Services – Strategic Outsourcing provides hosting and managed services for the entire server and storage infrastructure.

By outsourcing management of the entire environment to the Strategic Outsourcing team, Celero can rest assured that systems are expertly maintained and that any issues are resolved swiftly—without the need for intervention from its own IT staff.

Safeguarding customer relationships

With Oracle databases supported by the latest IBM technology, Celero has gained the robust, high-capacity platform it needs to deliver top-quality service to customers.

David Kornell explains: "Since refreshing our IBM system landscape, we have reduced data latency from two to three milliseconds to 200 microseconds. The result is a ten-times boost to Oracle database performance on average. We have also seen an across-the-board improvement in batch runs for all clients of approximately 35 to 40 percent.

"As Oracle databases form such an important part of our IT environment, the improved responsiveness has delivered a valuable boost to efficiency—for Celero, our clients and their end-customers. In fact, we have been able to boost performance for all teller-level transactions by approximately 25 to 30 percent, and have seen the same improvement in internet banking transactions.

"The performance enhancements mean that we can deliver a better experience for our clients, boosting retention. And, in turn, our clients can respond to their end-customers more efficiently, so satisfaction is improved across the board."

Dale McGowan concludes: "Oracle and IBM solutions give us the speed and flexibility we need to react quickly to changing requirements without compromising business continuity – and this is what our banking clients expect from us. With a robust technology backbone now in place, we can continue to grow and take on new clients all while guaranteeing the highest levels of service."

"We have been able to boost performance for all teller-level transactions by approximately 25 to 30 percent, and have seen the same improvement in internet banking transactions."

David Kornell, IT Architect, Celero

Solution components

- IBM® FlashSystem™ 840
- IBM Power System S822
- IBM System Storage® DS8870
- IBM XIV®
- IBM AIX®
- IBM PowerHA®
- IBM PowerVM®
- Oracle Database 11g
- IBM Global Technology Services®
- IBM Global Technology Services – Strategic Outsourcing
- IBM Global Financing

Take the next step

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