America First Credit Union

Building a thriving member base on next-generation infrastructure

Overview

The need
Increasing member numbers and new services at AFCU resulted in annual growth of transaction volumes of 15 percent – leading the organization to seek greater processing power to avoid limiting growth.

The solution
Upgraded to IBM® zEnterprise® EC12 servers running core banking workload on IBM z/VSE® alongside applications on Linux with IBM DB2® database, with IBM Tivoli® software to protect data against loss.

The benefit
Greater processing power at a higher density enabled a 25 percent reduction in the number of specialty engines used for Linux-based applications, lowering licensing costs by a similar proportion.

America First Credit Union (AFCU) is one of the largest credit unions in the United States, remaining a member-owned, not-for-profit cooperative financial institution since its inception in 1939. Headquartered in Utah, AFCU offers a range of services including online and mobile banking, Visa cards, mortgages and checking accounts, to name just a few.

Growing pains

The IBM System z® mainframe and IBM Power Systems™ platforms have been at the core of AFCU's infrastructure for more than 30 years. The organization's IT team is under continuous pressure to provide greater processing power to maintain service levels to members, while ensuring that AFCU can move fast on opportunities.

Scott Ellis, Senior IS Manager of Information Systems and Data Services at AFCU, comments, "During the recession, we acquired a number of failing organizations. Integrating these acquisitions into AFCU, along with organic growth, meant our member numbers rose by 33 percent in five years."

The greater processing-power density of the IBM zEC12 has yielded unexpected cost savings for AFCU, as described by Kent Swenson, Enterprise Systems Manager, "By moving to the zEC12, we have been able to consolidate our Linux environment by 25 percent, translating into a similar reduction in licensing costs."

Solution components

Software

- IBM® DB2® for Linux, UNIX and Windows
- IBM Tivoli® Storage Productivity Center for Replication
- IBM WebSphere®
- IBM z/VM®
- IBM z/VSE®
- SUSE Linux Enterprise Server

Hardware

- IBM Power® 770
- IBM Power 740
- IBM System Storage® DS8870
- IBM System z®: Integrated Facility for Linux
- IBM XIV® Storage System
- IBM zEnterprise® EC12

IBM Business Partner

- Sirius Computer Solutions

Kent Swenson, Enterprise Systems Manager at AFCU continues, "Some of the companies we acquired relied on paper records. To add these records to our own we needed to use document imaging software – a processing power-hungry process. Overall, we estimated that within a year, transaction volumes would rise by at least 15 percent and our storage requirements by 50 percent. It was time to look at refreshing our infrastructure."

Partnering with the best

AFCU decided to replace its existing IBM System z mainframe with the latest-generation IBM zEnterprise EC12 model, turning to IBM Premier Business Partner Sirius to help with sizing and configuration.

Working with Sirius, AFCU migrated its core banking system and a range of Linux-based applications to the IBM zEnterprise EC12 (zEC12) Enterprise Class platform. For exceptional resilience, the organization deployed one IBM zEC12 at each of its primary and backup datacenter locations, with data mirrored between the two. The zEC12 environment is connected to IBM Power Systems servers supporting AFCU's teller application and to storage systems including the IBM System Storage® DS8870 and IBM XIV® Storage System solutions.

Swenson comments, "Utah is on a fault line, so it is vital that we take measures to protect data. Near-real-time data replication enabled by IBM Tivoli software ensures that we have two copies of critical information, though the base isolation design of our primary data center should help protect our mainframe against physical damage."

Taking a simple approach

AFCU's core banking system was written for the IBM z/VSE operating system and the organization continues to run it on this environment. AFCU was one of the first adopters of the dedicated Linux processors for System z, named Integrated Facility for Linux (IFL), and continues to supplement its core banking functionality with new applications on Linux for System z. This environment includes IBM DB2 for Linux, UNIX and Windows, which enables AFCU to take advantage of the latest DB2 database technologies at relatively low total cost of ownership. IBM WebSphere® technologies link the two environments, giving AFCU a seamless mainframe environment that spans two distinct software landscapes.

"IBM is helping us stay ahead of the curve."

— Scott Ellis, Senior IS Manager of Information Systems and Data Services, America First Credit Union

Swenson adds, "Using IFLs, licensing is calculated per engine, rather than per instance, a much simpler approach. By moving to the zEC12, we have been able to consolidate our IFL environment by 25 percent, translating into a similar reduction in licensing costs."

Providing significantly more processing power than AFCU's previous mainframe, along with headroom for growth, the IBM zEC12 is the ideal platform to support the organization as it looks to new opportunities.

Swenson says, "We are investigating moving to a private cloud model on the zEC12 platform. The ability that IBM technology gives us to provision virtual servers on-the-fly is central to such an approach."

Ellis concludes, "We are hearing many businesses saying that virtualization is a real game-changer for them. But with IBM, we have been doing this for years, showing how IBM is helping us stay ahead of the curve."

For more information

To learn more about IBM zEnterprise solutions, contact your IBM sales representative or IBM Business Partner, or visit us at: **ibm.com**/software/systemz

To learn more about products, services and solutions from Sirius Computer Solutions, please visit: www.mysiriuszone.com

© Copyright IBM Corporation 2014

IBM Corporation
Software Group
Route 100
Somers, NY 10589

Produced in the United States
March 2014

IBM, the IBM logo, ibm.com, DB2, Power Systems, System Storage, System z, Tivoli, WebSphere, XIV, zEnterprise, z/VM and z/VSE are trademarks of International Business Machines Corp., registered in many jurisdictions worldwide. Other product and service names might be trademarks of IBM or other companies. A current list of IBM trademarks is available on the web at "Copyright and trademark information" at ibm.com/legal/copytrade.shtml

Linux is a registered trademark of Linus Torvalds in the United States, other countries, or both.

This document is current as of the initial date of publication and may be changed by IBM at any time. Not all offerings are available in every country in which IBM operates.

The client examples cited are presented for illustrative purposes only. Actual performance results may vary depending on specific configurations and operating conditions.

It is the user's responsibility to evaluate and verify the operation of any other products or programs with IBM products and programs. THE INFORMATION IN THIS DOCUMENT IS PROVIDED "AS IS" WITHOUT ANY WARRANTY, EXPRESS OR IMPLIED, INCLUDING WITHOUT ANY WARRANTIES OF MERCHANTABILITY, FITNESS FOR A PARTICULAR PURPOSE AND ANY WARRANTY OR CONDITION OF NON-INFRINGEMENT. IBM products are warranted according to the terms and conditions of the agreements under which they are provided.

Please Recycle

ZSC03199-USEN-00