



Van Waters & Rogers Powers Up
HDS Pilot Series™ Propels a Smooth Takeoff

HITACHI
DATA SYSTEMS

“With Pilot, we have a large, robust server that allows us to make acquisitions without constraints or worry.”

For computing as critical as your business

Pilot gives VW&R the capacity they need to keep running.

As the leading chemical distributor in the United States, providing more chemical products and related distribution services than any other company in the marketplace, Van Waters & Rogers places high demands on their mainframe. In addition to supporting approximately 500,000 transactions per day, the processor also serves as the central management tool for roughly 20 servers handling a wide range of applications. Add to this ongoing acquisitions of new companies, and it's easy to see why VW&R's existing processor is pushing its limits.

"We were operating at 96- to 97-percent capacity and figured we'd run out of gas sometime in the first quarter of 1998," explains Jim Enwall, Manager of Technical Support at VW&R. "The business wasn't suffering horribly, but it was clear we needed to plan ahead. Our secondary applications were running longer and had increased response times, and we recognized that what would suffer would be our Year 2000 development work."

With 2,300 employees in more than 100 locations throughout the U.S., VW&R could ill afford any slowdown. Searching for a mainframe solution that would increase capacity, use less floor space, help them prepare for future growth, and be as nondisruptive as possible, Enwall and his colleagues chose a Hitachi Data Systems Pilot Series™ processor for the job.

VW&R's planning pays immediate dividends.

By replacing VW&R's existing processor, Enwall hoped to achieve some very specific goals. "We wanted to reduce capacity utilization to 70 percent and increase application performance. We were also hoping to decrease the amount of floor space used by the processor because we had consolidated our data center into a much smaller room, and the old processor was taking up too much space."

The CMOS-based Pilot 27 chosen by Enwall and his colleagues delivered on these goals—and at a very competitive price. In the weeks following the installation, VW&R was back to 70-percent capacity. "This means we're ready for any new growth opportunities, and we can begin our Year 2000 development work for the general ledger application," states Enwall.

The increased capacity also allows VW&R to integrate multiple platforms so they can better utilize existing applications and take advantage of new technologies. "This is a key strategy of ours," says Enwall. "There's a potential for using Web servers and enabling these servers on the mainframe. Also, we weren't running TCP/IP on the old system because of overhead concerns. With that no longer an issue, we can now add applications and take advantage of new technologies such as the Internet."

The increased capacity also means better performance for VW&R's applications. Their main distribution system—UVX 2000—realized a 70-percent overall improvement in response time and their CPU-driven batch run times were decreased dramatically. One moment in particular stands out in Enwall's mind. "When we did the install, we wanted to put a load on it before making it available to the rest of the community. We targeted a four-hour outage on a Saturday evening, where we basically stopped production to make the switch. As a result, we started our batch jobs much later than normal. Not only did the jobs finish on schedule, but in some cases we beat our normal end times. And I think that impressed the folks around here. It was like we didn't even have the outage."

"Hitachi addressed our request as opposed to selling us items we weren't interested in."

Not only did Pilot deliver dramatic improvements in performance, it came in a substantially smaller footprint. "It gives us much more floor space," says Enwall. "We can actually move in the data center. It's not empty, but we gained a lot more room, and we're quite happy with that."

HDS worked with VW&R to provide a "beyond-the-box" solution.

The differentiators that put HDS in the front running included increased capacity and performance, competitive pricing, and Hitachi's reputation for high-quality products. But what really sold VW&R was the partnership HDS offered. "I liked working directly with the local team here. They were more partner than vendor, and sought to understand our concerns," notes Enwall. "We did our own capacity analysis and knew what we needed. Not only did HDS offer us a choice, but they took on a consulting role, recommending solutions that met our requests."

HDS support didn't stop at the installation either. "One of the great things about HDS is that they trained our operators on the new machine. The local team brought in engineers, showed us how to make it work, and helped us understand what to expect, which was very helpful. They delivered what we asked for—the agreement was a lot more intuitive and the whole experience was very positive," explains Enwall.

VW&R is positioned to tackle today's IT challenges.

HDS is dedicated to helping customers tackle the big issues:

- Global information access
- Central information management
- Nonstop business processing
- Business agility
- Year 2000.

According to Enwall, HDS and Pilot have helped them address all five of these IT challenges. "One of the purposes for increasing our capacity is to accommodate more Internet applications. We'll probably be moving more and more information to the Web—thus providing easier worldwide access to our data—and Pilot delivers the additional capacity we need to accomplish this.

"I'm also a big believer in centralized information management from the perspective that it reduces overall IT costs," states Enwall. "As we explore future plans for networking our whole environment, Hitachi could potentially serve as the base for the entire operation. Pilot gives us a large, robust server that will help us accomplish this."

As for nonstop business processing, business agility, and the Year 2000, Pilot's proving most beneficial to VW&R. "I get the sense that HDS puts a lot more effort into delivering a good product; there are significantly fewer errors and problems," says Enwall. "Pilot allows us to make acquisitions and not worry about constraints, and the additional capacity has cleared potential road blocks in our Year 2000 development work."

That's what HDS is all about—helping organizations like VW&R enhance business value and prepare for future growth with solutions that address today's IT challenges. We think it's critical. And it works.

For Jim Enwall, Manager of Technical Support at Van Waters & Rogers, a close working relationship is of paramount importance for a successful project. "With Hitachi, I felt like we were working with a business partner, someone who was interested in addressing our solutions."



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