MAXIMUM GROWTH

MaximumASP consolidates onto energy-efficient servers for 61% savings and standardizes on Dell hardware to become one of the nation's leading providers of hosting and consulting solutions.

MaximumASP

CUSTOMER PROFILE

COUNTRY: Louisville, Kentucky (USA)

INDUSTRY: Technology (Web hosting provider)

FOUNDED: 2000

NUMBER OF EMPLOYEES: 30+

WEB ADDRESS: www.maximumasp.com

CHALLENGE

MaximumASP needed reliable hardware to grow its Web hosting business and support innovative, first-to-market product offerings such as the Microsoft® SQL Server® 2008 Beta.

SOLUTION

MaximumASP has been running Dell hardware since the day the company powered on its first servers in 2000, and has since deployed a combination of Dell™ PowerEdge™ servers, Dell/EMC® storage area network (SAN) arrays, virtualization software from Microsoft, and a combination of Dell OpenManage™ Server Administrator and IT Assistant and Altiris® software for systems management. The company has also used Dell Global Infrastructure Consulting and Dell Warranty Parts Direct to help get maximum value from its server and storage investments.

BENEFITS

Get IT Faster
- Standardizing on single vendor helps eliminate procurement delays, takes advantage of economies of scale
- Out-of-the-box compatibility, consistent form factors help save staff time

Run IT Better
- Dell Warranty Parts Direct facilitates on-site hardware repair
- Quad-core technology helps enable better application performance

Grow IT Smarter
- Brainstorming partnership results in new products and services
- Scalable infrastructure helps enable rapid growth
- 61% savings through 8 to 1 consolidation onto more energy efficient servers

Having the proper IT infrastructure in place to support growth is challenge number one for any new business, but it's especially important for a hosting company. When it began operations in 2000, Louisville, Kentucky-based MaximumASP decided to standardize on one hardware vendor to ensure that it would have a platform—and a partner—that could foster continued growth, at whatever pace that might occur.

"WE'VE FOUND THAT DELL MAKES THE MOST COST-EFFECTIVE AND RELIABLE EQUIPMENT. IF YOU GO OUT ON OUR DATA CENTER FLOOR, YOU WILL NOT SEE ANOTHER SERVER PRODUCT."

Silas Boyle, Managing Partner, MaximumASP

As it turns out, that growth happened quickly, even in Internet time. Founded by three hosting industry veterans, MaximumASP started with a bare-bones staff and just six Dell servers. Today, the company hosts more than 44,000 domains for customers in over 60 countries, and has become a top choice for developers seeking a robust Microsoft Windows-based hosting platform for mission-critical Web applications.

Even though MaximumASP was a small startup at the time it began sourcing from Dell, Dell made it clear that it wanted the business, and treated MaximumASP with the same respect and urgency it offers its larger enterprise clients.

"Some of the other big hardware providers didn't see the potential, and probably didn't look at us as very big fish at the time and kind of moved on down the road," says Wade Lewis,

operations manager at MaximumASP and one of the company's founding partners. "That attentiveness on Dell's part was really big for us, so we chose to standardize on Dell for hardware and Microsoft for software."

SIMPLIFYING GROWTH FOR SUCCESS

The hardware infrastructure at MaximumASP ranges from older Dell PowerEdge and SC series servers all the way up to the latest high-performance PowerEdge 2950 and 2970 servers.

"When I walk into our data center, it blows my mind to this day," says Dominic Foster, senior systems engineer and MaximumASP's very first employee. "We started in a tiny little rack with six Dell servers, and now we have rows upon rows of Dell servers. It still amazes me that we've grown so much."

HOW IT WORKS

HARDWARE
- Dell PowerEdge 2970 servers with AMD™ Opteron™ processors
- Dell PowerEdge 2950 servers with Intel® Xeon® quad-core processors
- Dell PowerEdge SC420, SC430, SC440, SC1420, SC1425, SC1430, SC1435 servers
- Dell/EMC AX150, CX320 SANs

SOFTWARE
- Dell OpenManage Server Administrator and IT Assistant
- Microsoft Virtual Server
- Microsoft SQL Server 2000, 2005, 2008 databases
- Microsoft Windows® Server® 2003, 2008
- Altiris solutions for systems and application management

SERVICES
- Dell Global Infrastructure Consulting
- Dell Warranty Parts Direct

Dell hardware has supported MaximumASP's rapid growth through reliability—instead of worrying about servers going down, engineers can spend time innovating new and better products for MaximumASP's customers.

"We've found that Dell makes the most cost-effective and reliable equipment," says Silas Boyle, managing partner at MaximumASP. "If you go out on our data center floor, you will not see another server product. This business has changed constantly over the past seven years, and being able to grow alongside both Dell and Microsoft has been nothing but good for our business."

A BRAINSTORMING PARTNERSHIP

Dell has helped MaximumASP not only to secure existing business, but to win new business as well—by acting as a consultant and showing MaximumASP how it can take advantage of Dell products to take new offers to market.

"We can go to Dell and say 'We want to do this,' and there's a brainstorming partnership that occurs," says Foster. "Dell will put us in touch with their engineers, and we'll come up with a new product out of it."

Lewis agrees, adding, "What that allows us to do is get on with the latest and greatest technologies from Microsoft, which is the other piece of the puzzle for us, and be able to deploy the new technology such as offering beta versions and new software releases to our customers."

RUNNING IT FASTER, STRAIGHT OUT OF THE BOX

In November 2007, MaximumASP released the first Microsoft SQL Server 2008 Beta project in a hosted environment—in conjunction with partners Dell, Intel, Microsoft and the Professional Association for SQL Server (PASS)—to give first movers in the SQL developer community an opportunity to try the new technology for free. The offering has been very successful, and has been an ideal proving ground for MaximumASP's new Dell servers.

"We're running the SQL Server Beta on Dell PowerEdge 2950 servers with the latest generation Intel Xeon 64-bit quad-core processors," says Sarah Barela, manager of database services at MaximumASP. "They're especially good at allowing many users and multiple processes to run at the same time, which is really important in a multi-tenant environment."

Quad-core technology uses four execution cores on a single processor chip. This helps increase system performance so the processor can simultaneously handle multiple threads, reducing lag time when running more than one application.

"SQL Server 2008 has performed great on the Dell PowerEdge 2950s," says Barela. "We've been trying to stress the servers, and have been unable to reach that saturation point in our testing. At this point, the Dell hardware is more powerful than our tests. It will allow us to better manage the shared environments so that the customers can get better performance out of the SQL 2008 database. We'll also see more standardization in how we manage our

SQL servers, and that translates to reduced costs for us."

MaximumASP anticipates being able to support as many as 2,000 concurrent users on its current platform.

"The latest generation of Dell servers is optimized for Microsoft SQL Server 2008, and will help improve the performance of many other applications as well," says Foster. "They run great right out of the box. Dell and EMC, positioned as leaders in both the server and storage worlds, help ensure that hardware compatibility is not an issue. Implementing the most recent generations of Dell servers with an EMC CLARiiON SAN involves little more than installing HBAs [host bus adapters], configuring zoning and presenting storage. To date we have had zero downtime from our CX3-20."

REDUCING COMPLEXITY WITH A SINGLE VENDOR

Dell has helped simplify MaximumASP's business by acting as a single source vendor for server and storage hardware and also as a consultant to help manage it.

"By standardizing the equipment, it makes it that much easier to repair," says Lewis. "I think companies that have a very distributed hardware architecture are often challenged by having to deal with multiple vendor relationships. When things go wrong, you really don't know whom to call, and patterns don't develop like they do when you're using the same vendor. Dell has been very responsive, which has been a big help to us."

MaximumASP has used various Dell services at different stages of its growth. Dell Global Infrastructure Consulting Services, for example, helped the company integrate Dell OpenManage Server Administrator and IT Assistant with Altiris applications to develop a solution for server deployment and server management.

"We get alerts ahead of time so we can proactively fix servers during the day before the customer even notices an issue," says Foster. "It definitely beats getting calls at three in the morning and rushing out to the data center."

Dell Warranty Parts Direct helps keep MaximumASP stocked with the parts it needs to maintain and repair its many servers. "We can keep all the parts in house, so we're able to do break-fix on site," says Lewis. "That's a huge plus for us and something I haven't heard of a lot of people doing with other vendors."

Standardizing on Dell has also helped save the company time in procurement due diligence, enabling easy order tracking and inventory management, as well as streamlined customer relations when rolling out servers. What's more, the out-of-the-box compatibility that Dell provides means that MaximumASP's engineers don't have to worry about driver conflicts or a motherboard that won't talk to a video card.

"The bottom line," says Lewis, "is that we want to be able to say to our customers, 'These are the servers we offer. We order them from Dell. We open the boxes up. We provision and manage the servers using systems that Dell helped us find. When we put them out on the floor, we know they're going to run for four or five years if they need to.' And that really is a big simplification for us."

BUILDING A GREEN MACHINE

Over the past seven years, MaximumASP has seen its Dell hardware evolve with the times—often even ahead of the times.

"Dell has helped us simplify our business by releasing new products that anticipate market demand," says Foster. "These days everybody's talking about going green, but Dell servers were already doing that two years ago. We've saved 48.75 amps, or 61% savings over our previous systems, by consolidating 40 older servers onto five Dell PowerEdge 2950 servers."

MaximumASP is using Microsoft Virtual Server to further help reduce cooling and power costs and increase the company's profit margins.

LISTENING TO THE CUSTOMER

MaximumASP's relationship with Dell is not unlike its relationship with its own customers, Lewis observes.

"The reason our customers use our services is that they're Web developers, not hosting companies," he says. "Well, we're not server builders, and we don't want to be. Dell's willingness to sit down and ask 'Hey, what do you guys need out of hardware?' was a good indicator of the fact that they are willing to listen to hosting providers and that has been borne out over the course of our relationship. Simple things like form factors that Dell is taking into consideration in new product development are a big plus for us—life gets that much easier when we're not dealing with boxes that are changing size every six months to a year. Dell does a great job of listening and responding to our needs."

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