



Computer Paradise helps Triple-S achieve virtual perfection

BY CB STAFF

Just in time for its recently announced and already much-anticipated initial public offering (IPO), Triple-S has revamped its information technology (IT) infrastructure by tasking Computer Paradise Inc., one of the premiere computer software and hardware vendors and systems integration outfits on the island, with transforming the way the insurance giant does business.

“We had a new server coming through the door almost every day,” said Oscar Hernández, data center & infrastructure vice president of Interactive Systems Inc. (IS), the Triple-S subsidiary in charge of running the IT infrastructure for Triple-S Management Corp. and its subsidiaries.

“Every day, our business operations demand increased reliability and functionality from the services and applications we manage at IS,” Hernández explained. “We needed a solution that would allow us to better meet our end user requirements while, in turn, allowing them to provide better, more reliable service to Triple-S clients.”

With 1,800 user platforms distributed across five companies running 100 distinct applications on more than 100 servers, the prospect of making such a vast infrastructure run more efficiently and reliably could have easily been overwhelming to any but the most experienced and resourceful



The Triple-S virtualization project implementation team, from left: Luis Sánchez, IS infrastructure manager; Oscar Hernández, IS data center & infrastructure VP; Alberto Tirado, IS network manager; Juan H. Vázquez, Computer Paradise president & CEO; Héctor de Jesús, IS project manager.

experts in the field.

Fortunately, however, IS found the perfect partner in Computer Paradise, which for the past 20 years has amassed a wealth of experience implementing vast and complex hardware and software solutions for some of the island’s largest companies. Recently, for instance, Computer Paradise deployed and installed 2,700 personal computers and 100 servers for a customer in just 12 weeks.

“We already had a relationship with Computer Paradise for 10 years as our preferred vendor,” Hernández said. “Since we already knew what

they could do, they were the natural choice for this project.”

The so-called virtualization project involved taking more than 100 stand alone servers and consolidating their functions into three virtual servers. However, rather than decreasing the inherent redundancy of multiple systems, virtualization allows functionality to move more easily and seamlessly from one server to another. While the physical infrastructure remains, the virtual layer frees applications and operating systems from the hardware. In so doing, hardware failures are unnoticed by end users as applications are moved to operational servers as those that are down are repaired, while maintenance operations that would have previously needed service interruptions of up to several hours, can be done through virtualization while business is transacted as usual.

According to VMware, provider of the virtualization software for the project, “Virtualization allows multiple virtual machines with heterogeneous operating systems to run in isolation, side-by-side on the same physical machine. Each virtual machine has its own set of virtual hardware (e.g., RAM, CPU, NIC, etc.) upon which an operating system and applications are loaded. The operating system sees a consistent, normalized set of hardware regardless of the actual physical hardware components.” ■

Tips for effective outsourcing

BY CB STAFF

Choosing an outsourcing partner for maintenance within the FDA-regulated industries is something that should not be taken lightly. These types of partnerships require a number of key elements, and several guidelines exist in the creation of a successful and effective outsourcing relationship. As a pioneer in the area of maintenance outsourcing for FDA-regulated industries locally, Mentor Technical Group is qualified to offer suggestions for creating the special relationships that allow companies to address their own strategic objectives, while relying on a qualified partner to run its day-to-day maintenance operations.

“First of all, a true maintenance partnership means the outsourced maintenance partner has complete ownership of production and facilities maintenance, including workers, management, spare parts procurement, repairs, vendor management, processes, technical support, data collection, performance measurements and maintenance results,” explained Luis David Soto, Mentor Technical Group’s president. “This partnership requires a multidisciplinary approach and should contain several key elements.”

First and foremost, Soto says there must be a mutually beneficial relationship between the company and the maintenance outsource provider. Among the other elements he deems essential to a good partnership is the use of safety and regulatory compliance as a critical performance indicator, as well as the development of performance measurements, which are clearly communicated. Soto also cites other elements that should be present, including scheduled and unscheduled maintenance activities and established maintenance best practices, which are routinely tracked.

In terms of tips for an effective outsourcing relationship, Soto suggests preparing a description of the level of service the outsourcing partner needs, which should clearly indicate and clarify responsibilities, service levels, reporting requirements and conformance parameters.

“Look for companies that assume total responsibility for the maintenance elements,” advised Soto. “Also look for an outsourcing partner that uses existing maintenance talent as they assume responsibility for the maintenance operation.”

He also suggests investigating the company culture of the potential maintenance partner to make

sure it blends with the existing culture of the operation. “This review is critical to finding a partner you trust and feel comfortable with on a long term basis,” he said, adding that the review should include looking for characteristics consistent with the culture you hope to develop within the organization. Some of the characteristics he suggests to look for include the use of Six Sigma or other process improvement methodology, a history of working within FDA-regulated industries, the use of data and metrics for performance reporting, a history of treating employees well, satisfactory employee retention and surveys and pay-for-performance policies.

Mentor Technical Group offers a complete portfolio of integrated solutions and technical support services including utilities management, regulatory compliance and validations services to clients throughout the pharmaceutical, biotechnology, medical devices, hospitality, food and utilities industries. The company has 180 multidisciplinary employees and is noted for its strong validation and commissioning team. Last year, the Minority Development Business Council recognized Mentor as the top minority-owned, service-oriented firm in Puerto Rico. ■