

Jackson Walker LLP**CHALLENGE**

Improve manageability, resource utilization, and application performance of the IT environment in order to deliver value to the business and clients they serve

SOLUTION

Deploy Dell™ PowerEdge™ 1855 servers with Intel® processors running the Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003 operating system and Dell PowerEdge 2850 servers with Intel processors running VMware® ESX Server® software and Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003; Dell/EMC CX500 storage area network (SAN) to support a number of powerful applications, including Microsoft® SQL Server database software; Microsoft® Exchange 2003 software

BENEFIT

A consolidated, virtualized server and storage environment gives Jackson Walker a flexible, scalable computing platform—helping the firm provision resources quickly and easily to respond to business and client needs

The Case for Consolidation

Texas law firm Jackson Walker finds a favorable verdict in a streamlined, virtualized server and storage infrastructure from Dell

Mention “Texas justice,” and for some the phrase calls to mind images of swaggering sheriffs, dusty courtrooms, and the long arm of the law. But at the law office of Jackson Walker LLP, nothing could be further from reality. As one of the state’s largest law firms, Jackson Walker utilizes up-to-the-minute technologies to support the efforts of more than 300 attorneys. The firm regularly represents clients in such areas as corporate and securities, litigation, intellectual property, healthcare, labor and employment, legislative and regulatory, real estate, tax and estate planning, technology, bankruptcy, aviation, and international law. The law firm’s corporate clients include FORTUNE 500 companies, multinational corporations, major financial institutions, and a wide range of publicly traded corporations and closely held businesses.

As part of its commitment to excellence, the firm has an unwavering focus on practical, cost-effective legal solutions that add value for clients. As such, Jackson Walker’s IT team dedicates itself to intelligently applying technologies in support of its mission. “We like to think of ourselves as smart adopters of technology,” explains Steve McHargue, CIO at Jackson Walker. “We look for technologies that bring value to our business and the clients that we serve.”

Dell makes partner at Jackson Walker

In its effort to deliver a powerful, cost-efficient IT foundation for the firm, McHargue’s team recently completed a project aimed at streamlining its server and storage infrastructure. “We wanted to consolidate our data center into a more manageable IT resource,” he says. “The project began over two years ago when Dell assisted Jackson Walker in completely overhauling our power



and cooling infrastructure using APC InfraStruXure systems. With the foundation for around-the-clock computing in place, we turned our attention to the problem of server sprawl. We found ourselves adding one or more servers for every application we needed to support. Each of those servers had its own varying data storage requirements from 30GB to 2TB. Provisioning was difficult, backup was difficult, and the waste in computing and storage utilization was growing.”

The choice to work with Dell on the consolidation project was an easy one for Jackson Walker. “Our relationship with Dell started more than ten years ago, when we were searching for a better-built PC. At the time, we found that the reliability and consistency of the company’s products made it easy to create a manageable, scalable computing environment,” notes McHargue. “Since then, we have come to rely on Dell to provide not only the PCs but also the servers and storage that create an open, flexible IT environment.”

Firm finds in favor of consolidation, virtualization

With the help of Dell Services, Jackson Walker is consolidating its environment of over 60 PowerEdge 2650 and PowerEdge 1650 servers into a combination of PowerEdge 2850 servers to create a virtualization environment and PowerEdge 1855 blade servers for high transaction processing, all powered by Intel processors and connected to the CX500 SAN. This provides the firm with extremely high-performance, high-density computing, while offering economies of space, power, and cooling. The new server platform runs a mix of Microsoft® Windows® 2000 and Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003 operating systems and supports Microsoft® SQL Server, Microsoft® Exchange, and Microsoft® SharePoint® portal applications, in addition to a number of specialized legal applications, such as Hummingbird and FTI Ringtail Legal software.

At the core of the computing operations is Microsoft® SQL Server running on Dell PowerEdge servers. Jackson Walker runs SQL Server on two of the PowerEdge 1855 blade servers and two of its virtual servers. These four SQL servers provide database support for the firm’s document management, SharePoint, accounting, time and billing, and FTI Ringtail Legal applications. “The Dell and Microsoft SQL combination has been a rock-solid solution for us. SQL Server is easy to install and manage because it receives so much support from our independent software vendors—a critical factor for a business our size. And we know that Dell is going to ensure that SQL Server runs without compromise on its hardware.”

A huge aid to Jackson Walker’s consolidation effort is its utilization of VMware ESX Server virtualization software on several of the PowerEdge 2850 servers. Taking advantage of the powerful

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— Steve McHargue
CIO
Jackson Walker LLP

virtualization capabilities of the VMware software, McHargue’s team can create multiple virtual server instances on a single physical server—allowing for exceptional flexibility and scalability of IT resources. “We recently needed to create three new servers for our multi-tiered Ringtail Legal litigation support system,” explains McHargue. “Thanks to our Dell and VMware solution, rather than having to go out and procure three new pieces of hardware and provision them—which would have taken several days—we were able to provision all of those servers in less than 30 minutes. We installed the application that afternoon, and it has worked marvelously.”

For comprehensive management of its consolidated, virtualized server infrastructure, Jackson Walker employs VMware VirtualCenter systems management tools to help simplify and automate the administration of the firm’s technology resources—thereby helping Jackson Walker take control of its IT investment.

Dell and EMC present a compelling case for a SAN

To provide powerful storage support for the new server environment and the vital systems it supports, McHargue and his team chose to consolidate the firm’s storage infrastructure using a SAN based on a Dell/EMC CX500 Fibre Channel array. “The primary motivation behind implementing the SAN was that we had too many servers with huge direct-attached disk drives that were only

50 percent full,” explains McHargue. “We weren’t getting very good disk utilization by having a lot of servers with dedicated storage that wasn’t networked. What’s more, management was a problem. It just makes better economic sense to manage nine terabytes of data on a SAN than if that same data was spread out over 50 different servers. We estimated that the SAN would help us limit our personnel growth by five full-time employees over the next three years. And while we are saving that payroll, we get a better performing, better supported, and more reliable storage system.”

By providing a pooled storage resource for all of the servers in the Jackson Walker infrastructure, the Dell/EMC SAN delivers continuous, cost-effective availability for the firm’s mission-critical business applications—in addition to optimizing resource utilization. “When we buy an application, we can easily provision exactly the amount of storage it needs directly from the SAN, instead of purchasing dedicated storage,” explains McHargue. “Now, with our Dell/EMC SAN in place, there is far less waste and a lot less investment required to procure the amount of disk space we require. And we know that if an application needs more storage over time, we can easily scale to meet that need.”

Dell Services provide evidence of excellence

Dell Services also played a key role in helping Jackson Walker perform a storage consolidation and virtualization within its IT environment. “We needed to get our SAN and virtualization projects up and running quickly, so we enlisted the help of Dell Services,” says McHargue. “They helped us build the prototype

HOW IT WORKS

HARDWARE

- Dell™ PowerEdge™ 1855 servers with Intel® processors
- Dell PowerEdge 2850 servers with Intel processors
- Dell/EMC CX500 Fibre Channel storage system

SOFTWARE

- VMware® ESX Server® virtualization software
- VMware VirtualCenter management software
- Microsoft® Windows® 2000 and Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003 operating systems
- Microsoft® SQL Server database software
- Microsoft® Exchange software and Microsoft® SharePoint® portal applications
- FTI Ringtail Legal and Hummingbird legal applications

SERVICES

- Dell Storage Consolidation Services
- Dell Virtualization Services
- Dell Training Services
- Dell Gold Enterprise Support

system, grasp the technology, and understand how to provision disk drives, servers, and the SAN environment as our needs changed and grew. We felt great about having Dell Services help us kick start the project.”

Additionally, the IT staff at Jackson Walker took advantage of Dell Training Services when it became time to implement the SAN, so that the team could hit the ground running. “We sent three of our staff down to Dell for training,” notes McHargue. “They came back remarkably self-sufficient and able to perform all of the SAN-related tasks on their own.”

Since the implementation, Jackson Walker has relied on Dell Gold Enterprise Support to deliver unwavering assistance and keep its server and storage infrastructure up and running when the infrequent issue has arisen. “Dell Enterprise Support has scored very high for us—particularly with the SAN,”

MCHargue states. “On the rare instance that we need to call Dell Support with a problem, they help us fix it quickly.”

Dell technology leadership forms a solid closing argument

In its ongoing relationship with Dell, Jackson Walker has found a partner that is committed to helping the firm continue along its path as a smart adopter of technology. And McHargue and his team take full advantage of the technology expertise at Dell. “Working with Dell helps us stay aware of technology trends and understand how new products can benefit our business,” concludes McHargue. “Our trust in Dell’s vision gives us an added level of comfort, so as we apply new technologies—such as virtualization—we can feel confident that we are doing what is truly best for our firm and our clients.”



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