

Elavon, Inc.

Clients Count on Stratus

Elavon Keeps VMware® Virtualization at Peak Reliability with Stratus

Business situation

“Elevating payments...worldwide.” You would expect a company using that tagline to treat the availability and reliability of its payment systems as a priority. When that enterprise is Elavon, you would be absolutely right.

Rated as the number one processing network by MasterCard® for speed, availability and reliability, Elavon, Inc. provides end-to-end payment processing services to more than one million merchants in the United States, Europe and Canada.

Recently Elavon decided the time was right to leverage server virtualization, where possible, for the usual reasons: such as consolidating workloads onto fewer physical servers, gaining more flexibility to provision applications, saving on energy costs and increasing application availability during planned upgrades.

Exceptional reliability had to be part of the plan, however, when it came to virtualizing a number of customer-facing quality assurance (QA) and user-acceptance testing (UAT) applications. For this set of highly visible applications, Stratus ftServer systems and VMware Infrastructure 3 were chosen to assure the flawless operation the company sought.

“Stratus’ proven reliability gave us the confidence to proceed with virtualizing our critical customer-facing test and support applications.”

Mr. Frank Bolling

Vice President of Systems and Technology
Elavon

Quick Facts

Solution profile

- Sustains industry-leading availability and reliability
- Handles end-to-end payment processing
- Serves more than one million merchants internationally
- Uses VMware® virtualization for customer-facing test and support applications

Products

- Stratus® ftServer® systems
- VMware Infrastructure 3
- Microsoft® Windows Server® operating system
- Stratus ftServer V Series and Continuum® systems
- Stratus VOS operating system

Services

- Stratus CALM™ Support Services
- Stratus CALM Professional Services

“Stratus ftServer systems and VMware are an ideal mission-critical combination,” said Frank Bolling, vice president of systems and technology.

Business objectives

The words “mission critical” define Elavon’s business needs:

- Support payment products with the most reliable network in the industry
- Handle transactions from thousands of international locations, 24/7
- Incorporate redundancy into every processing system across the enterprise
- Obtain the right availability, with the right performance, at the right price
- Benefit from virtualization wherever practical

The Stratus solution

Elavon’s long history with Stratus servers instilled the necessary confidence to move ahead with virtualizing the QA and UAT applications. The company started using Stratus Continuous Availability servers not long after its founding in 1991 as NOVA Information Systems in Atlanta.

Count On Stratus™



Like earlier generations of Stratus systems the company has used, their newest fault-tolerant ftServer systems are engineered with Continuous Processing® features — lockstep redundant hardware, failsafe system software, and ActiveService™ capabilities — that ensure uptime and protect data integrity. Applications need not be modified in any way to benefit from this availability protection. The ftServer family has surpassed 99.999% uptime at customer sites worldwide.

Unlike clustered servers that are more complex to configure and manage, continuous availability features are built into the hardware of the Stratus systems. Processing continues uninterrupted in the event of a component failure, without downtime or data loss. That gives the IT team a simpler way to meet their mandate to incorporate fail-safe redundancy into payment processing and key customer-facing systems. “It’s

“You can’t argue with the availability, and the customer service is second to none. We’ve had a productive relationship with Stratus.”

Mr. Frank Bolling

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better for the administrator to have the availability controlled by the hardware at a microcode and firmware level,” said Bolling.

At this writing, Elavon has deployed a total of about 50 Stratus Continuous Availability servers, most of which are ftServer systems running the Microsoft® Windows Server® operating system. Some of these servers drive customer-facing QA and UAT; others run e-commerce and gift card applications.

The company continues to use Stratus Continuum and ftServer V Series systems to run its trusted payment authorization application based on the Stratus VOS operating system. “The VOS-based authorization system written by the founders here is one of the best applications I’ve ever been involved with. It’s one of the reasons that we’ve been recognized by MasterCard as the best processor in the industry,” Bolling stated.

Business impact

Elavon’s business has grown and changed since its early days, as has the technology the company has uses to enable it. Today for the appropriate QA and UAT applications, virtualization enables fast and flexible provisioning and minimizes the need to acquire additional physical servers — yet still delivers the assurance that Elavon customers will experience the reliability and performance they expect.

Not only have the Stratus Continuous Availability servers lived up to their promise, but also they have kept total cost of ownership (TCO) under control because of the redundant components built into every Stratus system. What’s more, this level of redundancy is achieved without doubling the software license fees, as would be the case for any software that requires active/active licensing on a cluster.

“Virtualizing the QA and UAT applications has helped us reduce costs over a non-virtualized environment, and the Stratus ftServer systems increase protection against the unplanned downtime that would cause our customers to lose confidence and put business at risk,” Bolling said.

Stratus service has executed to the same high standard. Since day one, Support Services have provided 24/7, proactive uptime protection together with the Continuous Availability servers’ self-monitoring and automatic problem reporting. Elavon’s IT team has also called on the expertise of Professional Services to handle tasks such as performance analysis and application development support over the years.

About Stratus

Stratus Technologies focuses exclusively on helping its customers keep critical business operations online without interruption. Business continuity requires resiliency and superior availability throughout the IT infrastructure, including virtual environments. Stratus delivers a range of solutions that includes software-based high availability, fault-tolerant servers, availability consulting and assessment, and remote systems management services. Based on its 28 years of expertise in product and services technology for total availability, Stratus is a trusted solutions provider to customers in manufacturing, health care, financial services, public safety, transportation & logistics, and other industries.

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