

GSD&M Advertising

CHALLENGE	SOLUTION	BENEFIT
Devise an IT strategy to support the fast growth of GSD&M Advertising, as well as keep up with the fast-paced nature of the advertising business; provide an IT infrastructure that enables the agency to be more creative than the competition	Deploy Dell™ PowerEdge™ servers running the Microsoft® Windows Server™ operating system, Oracle 10g and VMware® virtualization software; a Dell/EMC CX700 storage area network (SAN); Dell OptiPlex™ desktops and Latitude™ notebooks; Dell OpenManage™ software, with the Altiris® Management Suite®; Dell Enterprise Platinum Support; Dell Financial Services™	Standardized Dell and Microsoft® server infrastructure delivers excellent reliability, allowing the IT department to think highly strategically; Dell scalable enterprise strategy helps GSD&M to respond rapidly to the needs of new clients; Dell delivers a very positive ROI—“with an uppercase ‘R’ and a lowercase ‘i’”

How to Get Ahead in Advertising

A complete portfolio of Dell servers, storage, personal computers, and services sends GSD&M on its excellent ad venture

Austin, Texas, is a long way from Madison Avenue, but that has not stopped GSD&M from rising to the top of the ad game. Maybe that explains why the full-service advertising agency—which has 750 employees and \$14 billion in annual billings—calls its hometown in the Lone Star State “Idea City.” To be sure, the big ideas at GSD&M have helped it attract an all-star client list that includes Wal-Mart, Southwest Airlines, and the PGA TOUR. And the idea brokers at GSD&M have certainly come a long way since six humble University of Texas grads founded the agency in 1971. Yet, while the creative vision at GSD&M has driven the company’s growth during the past 30 years, the creative success of GSD&M has been powered by the company’s smart use of IT.

“We in the IT department see ourselves as enablers,” explains GSD&M Chief Technology Officer Jerry Rios. “We allow our creative people to respond quicker and deliver work faster than our clients have been accustomed to in the past.”

The need for speed

For more than a decade GSD&M has been leading the charge for the intelligent deployment of IT to support creative endeavors. Prior to selecting Dell as its sole hardware vendor three years ago, GSD&M relied on Compaq and IBM for personal computers, servers, and

storage. Then, it went shopping for an alternative supplier that could keep up with the breakneck speed of the ad business.

“The impetus for switching to Dell was fast delivery of equipment—from the factory and to our employees,” Rios explains. “With our previous suppliers, it seemed like it would take a long time from the time when the order was placed to the time we would see the product at the door. Then, often times, we would



have to open the system up to install memory that exceeded what could be ordered as part of the base system. With Dell, all the systems come preconfigured, so we can deploy immediately without any additional hardware provisioning steps.”

All Dell, all the time

Today, Dell is enabling the enablers at GSD&M. In fact, Dell supplies all of the hardware GSD&M uses across all of its operations. “Dell products comprise our core infrastructure,” Rios says. “If it prints, processes, or serves, it’s a Dell.”

As part of his desire to improve the reliability and ease-of-management of the GSD&M IT infrastructure, Rios decided to standardize on Dell servers running the Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003 operating system. Today, GSD&M makes use of a wide swath of Dell servers, including PowerEdge 1650 servers, PowerEdge 1750 servers, PowerEdge 1850 servers, PowerEdge 2650 servers, and PowerEdge 2850 servers. Most recently, GSD&M purchased a next-generation quad processor PowerEdge 6850 server.

In order to get the most out of its server investment, GSD&M plans to host several virtual servers on the single PowerEdge 6850 server using VMware virtualization software. “We plan to consolidate 18 virtual servers on one physical server,” Rios explains. “The PowerEdge 6850 is very powerful hardware that is going to allow us to clear out a huge area of our data center.”

Of course, Dell servers are a compelling choice because they can integrate seamlessly with any number of powerful enterprise applications from a myriad of vendors. And at GSD&M, the servers run a number of applications, including Oracle 10g and Microsoft® SQL Server databases. A PowerEdge 2850 server runs a business automation software package supported by an Oracle 10g database. “The person who installed the software system remarked that we have the best data center and the most robust Oracle setup that he had ever seen,” Rios says. “And, all of it runs on Dell.”

Another set of PowerEdge servers house HR and payroll applications that use SQL Server databases. “Our HR application allows employees to get pay stubs, change personal information, and integrate with Exchange data,” Rios continues. “Dell servers running SQL Server have really helped us better support our employees.” In addition to HR and payroll applications, Dell servers running SQL Server power the company-wide intranet and other internal applications.

Aside from database software, Dell servers can provide peace of mind by lending security and performance to other mission-critical applications, such as the Microsoft® Exchange Server. “We have a big Exchange environment,” Rios claims. “And that data is of critical importance to us.”

In much the same way that standardizing on Dell servers improves server setup and deployment, the IT department also relies on standardized Dell desktops to ameliorate management

headaches. The company outfits all employees with Dell desktops and notebooks, including Dell OptiPlex GX280 desktop computers and Dell Latitude D600 notebook computers. In order to help speed the deployment and improve the management of its computers, GSD&M uses Dell OpenManage along with the Altiris Management Suite.

“The combination of Dell OpenManage and Altiris Management Suite has delivered a big return on investment,” Rios claims. “Previously, when we set up a new computer, we would have to dispatch someone to the desktop in order to move all the files and migrate the configuration settings and preferences. That took an hour or two per desktop. With the Dell and Altiris software solution everything gets provisioned ‘auto-magically’—we just let it run and everything gets done.”

“When we acquire a big new client we might need to add 50 people. Knowing that we can have new Dell equipment here fast, and that it is ready to deploy, allows us to satisfy those needs, which is an essential aspect of our competitiveness.”

— **Jerry Rios**
Chief Technology Officer
GSD&M

Hoping to improve the responsiveness and recoverability of its storage, GSD&M is currently in the process of upgrading its storage area network with a high-performance Dell/EMC CX700. “All of our storage lives on the SAN,” Rios explains. “Every e-mail that comes in and goes out of the company is stored for reporting requirements to clients. We have a continuous log of e-mail dating back a few years, and it is all stored safely away on Dell equipment. Plus, the SAN grants our IT infrastructure additional flexibility by allowing us to rapidly add storage to a server and move files from one server to another. And, it gives us fast disaster recovery capabilities because the data is not directly tied to a server, so if a server goes down, the data isn’t lost.”

In order to ensure that product procurement takes place in a way that makes financial sense, GSD&M has also turned to Dell for equipment leasing. “Dell Financial Services makes leasing new

computers really easy,” explains Rios. “And leasing equipment allows us to refresh our systems every three years, thus allowing us to provide our employees with the most current technology available.”

Aside from financial services, GSD&M relies on Dell Platinum Enterprise Services in order to provide peace of mind in the unlikely event that something does go wrong. “Platinum Enterprise Services has been wonderful,” explains Rios. “It’s nice to know that Dell can have a technician here in under four hours if something unusual should happen. Dell is always looking for ways to make its customers happier.”

At the top of their game

Needless to say, GSD&M is a very happy customer. The Dell scalable enterprise strategy helps GSD&M grow its IT infrastructure as its business continues to burgeon. And the reliability of Dell products makes it easy for GSD&M to plan for future growth because the company can accurately predict the performance it will get from augmenting its infrastructure.

Plus, information provided by Dell customer contacts makes scalability even easier to achieve. “Our Dell contacts are very good about sharing their technology roadmaps with us,” Rios says. “When Dell says that a product line is not going to change for three years, we know we can lock into it. That helps us because we can design an infrastructure with future scalability built in ahead of time.”

HOW IT WORKS

HARDWARE

- Dell PowerEdge 1650, PowerEdge 1750, PowerEdge 1850, PowerEdge 2650, and PowerEdge 2850 servers; Dell/EMC CX700 SAN; Dell OptiPlex GX280 desktop computers and Dell Latitude D600 notebook computers.

SOFTWARE

- Microsoft® Windows Server™ 2003; VMware server virtualization software; Oracle10g and Microsoft® SQL Server databases; Microsoft® Exchange Server, Dell OpenManage with the Altiris Management Suite.

SERVICES

- Dell Financial Services; Dell Platinum Enterprise Services.

From a business perspective, IT scalability is important for GSD&M: as the company adds new clients, it needs to supplement its workforce and IT infrastructure almost overnight. “Being an advertising agency, we have to respond quickly,” explains Rios. “When we acquire a big new client we might need to add 50 people. Knowing that we can have new Dell equipment here fast, and that it is ready to deploy, allows us to satisfy those needs, which is an essential aspect of our competitiveness.”

Ultimately, the scalability permitted by Dell products and services repays the cost of investing in the infrastructure. “We haven’t done an exhaustive analysis,” Rios says, “but it’s pretty easy to tell that with Dell, we get a very positive ROI—that’s with an uppercase ‘R’ and a lowercase ‘i.’”

While cost savings are undoubtedly important, another benefit Rios and his staff enjoy as Dell customers is that with Dell equipment they can focus on issues of strategic importance rather than simply serving as a 24-hour support desk. “Instead of constantly putting out fires, we can be strategic and deliver the IT services that help our internal clients satisfy their clients and ultimately grow our business,” says Rios.

Dell has achieved a pretty high status in Rios’s eyes. “At GSD&M we talk about being an MVP—Most Valuable Partner—in our clients’ eyes,” Rios concludes. “Dell is our MVP because of the way it delivers products, handles the servicing, and shares information. Dell has become a one-stop shop where we can procure pretty much everything. Simply put, Dell delivers.”



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August 2005

Printed in the U.S.A.

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