

Driving Online Sales

Denver Solutions Group and IBM® put Year One's e-commerce engine into overdrive.



Where do you find the perfect part to complete the restoration of a 1958 Impala, a 1963 Buick or a 1969 Firebird Trans Am? Hundreds of thousands of passionate “muscle car” fans across the United States know the search can be difficult and time-consuming, unless they go directly to Year One, Inc.

Based in Braselton, Georgia, Year One is usually accessed at www.yearone.com: “the online shopping mall for the auto enthusiast.” Started in the garage of owner Len Athanasiades in 1980, the company now occupies one large office/warehouse and produce 13 printed books and 4 online only catalogs totaling more than 8,000 pages of Chrysler, Ford and GM parts and accessories.

Calling the Web site “active” is an understatement. “Our site averages roughly 500,000 page hits each day and rings up about \$400,000 in sales every month,” says Joe Bunker, Senior Network Engineer for Year One. “We’re definitely serving a growing market.”

With that kind of activity, Year One needed a solid technology infrastructure. However, HP/Compaq server failures had taken down the Web site for anywhere from 30 minutes to three days. “We needed a more fault-tolerant solution,” says Mr. Bunker.

Year One talked to a number of vendors, including IBM Premier Business Partner Denver Solutions Group, Inc. (DSG) of Englewood, Colorado. IBM Premier Business Partners, like DSG, must achieve a high level of proven customer satisfaction, as measured annually by an independent survey company selected by IBM. They also invest in skills development, technical training and other IBM programs to ensure the advice they give is of the highest quality.

DSG recommended rebuilding the system with five IBM @server® xSeries® servers supported by VMware ESX Server, which uses virtualization technology to consolidate and partition single enterprise servers into multiple virtual machines. This stable, secure and scalable system ensured maximum uptime for a finely tuned e-commerce engine.

“DSG’s expertise in server consolidation and system design in partnership with xSeries servers provides customers like Year One with a robust, reliable and secure systems infrastructure to easily handle today’s on demand environment, while still providing a smooth growth plan for tomorrow.”

Mike Gibson, xSeries Brand Manager, IBM Americas



“The entire Information Technology staff were not initially friendly to IBM equipment, so it really needed to prove itself. Not only did it prove itself, it exceeded expectations.”

– *Kevin Gates, Senior Solutions Specialist, Denver Solutions Group, Inc.*

DSG steers Year One in the direction of value and performance

Founded in 1991, DSG has more than 150 technology professionals providing IT solutions in every state. “We exclusively sell and support IBM products, and pride ourselves on our depth of experience in all IBM hardware platforms as well as the corresponding operating systems and software products,” says Kevin Gates, Senior Solutions Specialist.

Year One did a great deal of analysis on different vendors, including IBM, Dell® and HP®/Compaq®. “At first, we were very cost-driven, and felt the initial expense for an IBM server was more than the competitors’ prices,” admits Mr. Bunker. “Kevin helped us see that we weren’t comparing apples to apples, and that if we looked at the reliability, speed and architectural features the IBM technology included, we were getting better value for our money with IBM. We also felt the support options offered excellent value.”

“The entire Information Technology staff were not initially friendly to IBM equipment, so it really needed to prove itself,” says Mr. Gates. “Not only did it prove itself, it exceeded expectations.”

Implementation a smooth ride

Year One previously had one server supporting e-commerce transactions and one supporting the Web site. The new setup gave them two servers for each, one pair running in a cluster for the back-end database, the other running load balanc-

ing/fail over; so the applications could continue to run even if there were problems with any one server. A fifth server runs VMware ESX Server, dynamic partitioning software designed for server consolidation, improved hardware usage and simplified management.

VMware allows several similar or dissimilar operating systems to run as virtual machines on a single server for increased capacity on production servers. In this case, Year One runs ten smaller Microsoft® Windows® servers as virtual machines handling a domain controller, file/print server, database servers, an e-mail server and development servers.

“We had two implementations, and both went fairly quickly,” says Mr. Bunker. “The first was the e-commerce setup, and the second was the infrastructure setup – using VMware to create virtual machines on one of the servers. These have run very well and have enabled us to migrate from older, less stable hardware and to consolidate servers.”

IBM Business Partner:	DSG
Solutions:	Server Consolidation
Servicing:	North America
Customer Target:	Cross Industry

Performance, responsiveness up

“I had talked up the xSeries so much that Year One didn’t think it could possibly be that good,” says Mr. Gates. “They also thought the load on the system would max out its capacity, but they still have room to grow.”

With the new system in place, Year One has seen a definite increase in the performance and responsiveness of the Web site. “The number one benefit is that we have more uptime because of the fault tolerance,” says Mr. Bunker. “It’s been very stable. IBM’s support has also been as promised, and DSG has been very responsive to our needs and requests.”

With the previous setup, hardware-related problems could and did take the e-commerce site down for several days at a time. Hardware constraints also caused problems when television ads drove extra traffic to the Web site, making it unusable.

“Now, we have our fault-tolerant system,” says Mr. Bunker. “If a single server has a problem, the other will take over and our customers won’t know anything is wrong. It’s a better experience for users, and you can’t over-estimate the benefits to our company of being able to continue to serve customers and generate revenue.”

As a vehicle for company growth, the IBM xSeries has proved to be a classic.

For additional information on how **DSG** can help your organization, contact us at **800-279-3835** or visit our Web site at **www.dsginfo@dsgroup.com**.