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FUJITSU TAKES TO SKIES

AMERICA WEST ENLISTS TECHNOLOGY SOLUTIONS UNIT TO TACKLE SERVER-RELATED DELAYS, CANCELLATIONS

By Paula Musich

MAINTENANCE SERVICES AREN'T GLAMOROUS, but they can be strategic—especially when they cover mission-critical servers and applications that impact the bottom line.

When America West Airlines Inc. began searching for a way to manage its systems and reduce the number of flight delays and cancellations resulting from server failures, the company went to Fujitsu Technology Solutions Inc. According to airline officials, Fujitsu provides proactive managed services for Sun Microsystems Inc. Solaris servers as well as for Fujitsu's own PrimePower Unix servers.

More important, those services have helped reduce delays by 75 percent, according to Doug Cummings, senior director of technology operations at America West, in Tempe, Ariz.

"I had no idea they provided such great services," said Cummings, whose company had first looked to Sun, IBM and Hewlett-Packard Co. for help in bringing in and maintaining new Unix servers to better support the airline's yield management system and other Unix applications.

In fact, it was Fujitsu's multivendor maintenance services that gave it an edge over better-known competitors. "I didn't want to have to call multiple vendors for support. My

preference in all cases is to consolidate. I don't want multiple people pointing fingers," said Cummings. With Fujitsu, "we get everything we need, regardless of the nameplate on the box," he said.

The door was opened to Fujitsu's managed services unit, thanks to America

West's effort to add more server capacity for new applications and build in greater server availability through a move to a clustering architecture. The architecture was thought to offer greater reliability.

The airline had planned to add 30 new Unix servers with clustering software, but Fujitsu "told us they didn't believe we needed to invest so much in clustering or hardware. They believed that when you are looking to resolve a reliability issue, you need to go to the root cause. They believed clustering was a band-aid," said Cummings.

Following Fujitsu's advice, America West installed two PrimePower servers and transferred all its Sun server maintenance to Fujitsu. The airline had found that about 80 to 90 percent of the system problems it had in the past were the result of hardware problems.

"A key metric for us is measuring flight delays that result from technology performance issues or failures. If it's a slowdown that affects the business, I consider that a failure," said Cum-



Fujitsu services have helped cut flight delays.

tings. Although it has yet to reach its stated goal of zero delays caused by technology issues, America West is well on the way.

"Two years ago, we were responsible for about 104 flight delays caused by technology failures on a monthly basis. We got that number down to 25 a month," Cum-

mings said. "We believe Fujitsu is helping with that by resolving [hardware] problems before they affect the business."

Fujitsu differed significantly in its service philosophy from Sun, which previously provided maintenance for the America West servers.

"Fujitsu's response when we have an issue is to engage everybody, as opposed to engaging one person and exhausting their ability, then the next and the next," said Cummings. "They swarm [the problem] from all angles, whether that server is down or has a performance issue. They surround it to resolve it as quickly as possible."

Surrounding the problem means Fujitsu's system engineers are frequently dispatched to America West's Tempe computing site to resolve critical



issues. Fujitsu's managed services unit also periodically performs local and remote health checks on America West systems, acting as an augmentation to Cummings' server team.

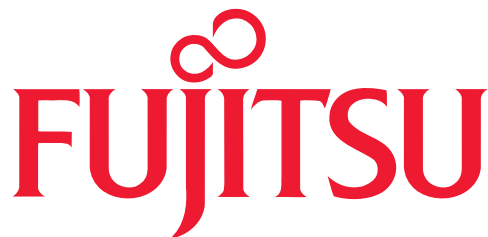
The level of expertise available to America West through the managed services unit also improved. For a year before Fujitsu began servicing America West's Sun servers, one particular server would routinely fail once a month without explanation. "Fujitsu found a bad processor. That day, we had a new board installed, and the box hasn't gone down since,"

said Cummings.

Fujitsu Ltd.'s seemingly well-kept secret belies its global presence as a significant player in the IT services space. It is among the top five IT services players globally, although it is much stronger outside the United States. Overall, Fujitsu's services business generated \$16 billion in revenue for Fujitsu last year, representing 40 percent of the Tokyo-based company's overall revenue.

Much of its limited visibility can be attributed to its decentralized management and multiple

brands, according to Bill Martorelli, an analyst with Hurwitz Group Inc., in Framingham, Mass. "They include a number of entities, including the old ICL [International Computers Limited plc.] in Europe. Amdahl [Corp.] had a strong presence in North America, and then there are other units in different places. The challenge will be to put those elements [together]," said Martorelli. The managed services unit was previously a part of Amdahl's services operation before Fujitsu created the managed services unit. ☛



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