

The First American Corporation, Santa Ana, CA



The First American Corporation Primes for Growth through Data Center Consolidation, with Help from Fujitsu PRIMEPOWER Servers

- Challenge:** The First American Corporation, a Fortune 500 company and leading supplier of business and real estate information, has grown rapidly through mergers and acquisitions. It wanted a way to more efficiently and cost effectively manage multiple data centers, ensure high availability, and prepare for long-term growth in its market segments.
- Solution:** First American opted to consolidate all IT resources in two large data centers in California and Texas, placing high priority on creating a consistent architecture. The new design utilizes fewer, faster servers, including PRIMEPOWER systems from Fujitsu running many of the company's core enterprise applications.
- Benefits:** The PRIMEPOWER servers help First American to more efficiently manage and scale its pool of computing resources. By relying on fewer but high performance PRIMEPOWER servers, the company can allocate resources based on customer demand, scale server resources as needed, and ensure redundancy between data centers in the event of a service disruption.

“We’ve been able to go from hundreds of servers to a single digit number of servers for our core applications. And because the Fujitsu systems are much faster, we can use fewer CPUs and other resources to do more.”

– *Evan Jafa, CTO, The First American Corporation*



Fujitsu PRIMEPOWER® server.

The First American Corporation provides businesses and consumers alike with valuable information that helps them make important financial decisions. As the world’s largest supplier of business and real estate information, First American does this through a growing family of companies and Web sites that combine advanced analytics with vast data resources. Often commanding leading market share positions in their industries, these companies help people secure a mortgage, buy a house, find a job, rent an apartment, and open or buy a business, just to name a few.

Headquartered in Santa Ana, Calif., First American is a Fortune 500 company with approximately 2,100 offices worldwide. Much of its recent growth has come through acquisition of other information providers. Many of these acquired companies had developed their own systems and data centers over the years. But when combined under one roof it was no longer cost effective for First American to operate each one independently.

“When we looked out across the company three years ago, we saw that the most efficient way to operate our breadth of IT services was through consolidation,” says Evan Jafa, chief technology officer. Now, nearly 40 separate IT infrastructures have been consolidated under First American’s state-of-the-art Technology Center in Santa Ana.

Powered by Fujitsu

A second data center located just outside of Dallas, Texas will offer even more consolidation benefits, including high availability services, enhanced disaster recovery, and system standardization. Both data centers are highly redundant, automated and designed to be secure, structurally sound, and efficient. Each data center also relies on highly reliable Fujitsu PRIMEPOWER® servers to help create a single, consistent infrastructure. The PRIMEPOWER systems are noted for their superior performance, high throughput, and track record for reliability.

“Consolidation was a trigger for us to standardize on our technology,” says Jafa. Today, Fujitsu PRIMEPOWER servers running UNIX and core mission-critical applications such as Oracle ERP software make up an important part of First American’s IT standardization effort. “As a general strategy we continue to have a handful of strategic partners and Fujitsu is always considered one of those,” says Jafa.

Big companies choose to consolidate for many reasons and First American is no different in this regard. However

with information its chief asset and much of it delivered 24x7 over the Internet, First American views high availability as one of its most important IT design goals. Using two data centers in tandem to achieve this is a key part of the company's strategic plan. "Having both a primary and backup location for all of our systems is important," says Jafa. "But the primary vision for bringing these two locations online is to enhance our ability to deliver high availability systems in a load balanced manner."

A Focus on High Availability

Plenty of thought has been put into each data center's physical layout as well as the systems and software inside. Both data centers, for example, are designed for maximum survivability in the event of a natural disaster such as an earthquake or hurricane. The consulting engineers rate the seismically isolated Santa Ana facility a nine on a 10-point scale for survivability. "If it wasn't for the fact that we have an airport nearby, we would have gotten the highest rating possible," says Jafa.

Virtualization also plays a major role in the enterprise's data centers. Using the virtualization capabilities of the PRIMEPOWER servers, First American can better allocate computing resources and recover faster following a service disruption. Additional benefits from virtualization and PRIMEPOWER multi-processor technology include reduced power and cooling, simplified IT management, and long-term cost savings.

Better Customer Service

Virtualization offers many benefits, but most important for First American is improved customer service. "For us, virtualization means that we can serve our customers better from any location and at any time using the pool of resources we have available," says Jafa. "We think of virtualization as our ability to more efficiently manage and operate our various applications and systems as one."

A Simpler, More Cost-Effective Environment

Data center consolidation projects are unavoidably complex, but paradoxically they also offer the opportunity to simplify systems and processes. By replacing hundreds

of servers in its older data centers with a small number of powerful PRIMEPOWER servers running enterprise software, First American's cost savings have been significant. "We have learned that consolidation is a very effective way to contain system and networking costs," says Jafa. "For example, we've been able to go from hundreds of servers to a single digit number of servers for our core applications. And because the Fujitsu systems are much faster, we can use fewer CPUs and other resources to do more."

Less Operational Complexity, Easier to Scale

A related benefit is that the standardized data centers require less overhead to operate. "The efficiency we gain by centrally managing our systems from a simplified architecture is significant," says Jafa. Pointing to his use of virtualization and standardization from using PRIMEPOWER servers and other technologies, Jafa says complexity—and cost—is squeezed out. "Simplified architectures consume fewer resources and result in less operational complexity. At the same time, consolidation makes it easier to scale when we need to add resources."

Standardization offers one other benefit increasingly important to publicly held companies like First American: easier compliance with government regulations. "Applying routine checks and balances for compliance is easier for us now with just two data centers," says Jafa. A good example is keeping up with the flow of software patches and virus signature updates that are a business fact of life. "We apply those centrally in our data centers and they go into effect immediately across all our systems," says Jafa. "Thanks to standardization, we now have a common denominator for compliance."

Service and Support are Key

Besides using Fujitsu servers, First American also relies on Fujitsu's services team for support. Before the Santa Ana data center went online, for example, Fujitsu's migration team helped move IT equipment from multiple suppliers into the new facility or back to the leasing



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company as needed. Similar services are now being provided in Dallas to help finalize that move.

Not surprisingly, First American places a high value on vendor services. “One of the reasons we partner with Fujitsu is because of the ongoing project support we’ve received,” says Jafa. “We consider support just as important as technology, and we’ve been very happy with Fujitsu’s services. Knowing that Fujitsu has a very strong support organization is part of our reason for growing our relationship with them.”

Ready for the Future

With Santa Ana already online and the Dallas data center preparing to migrate to a newly renovated venue, First American has an IT infrastructure ready to grow with the business for years to come. By consolidating IT resources in just two locations, the company has reduced redundant overhead, simplified operations, and slashed costs while at the same time enhancing compliance.

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Most importantly of all, data center consolidation helps First American guarantee its customers reliable information delivery. As Jafa puts it, “We believe these two data centers have the flexibility to support our organization and its customers well into the next decade.”