

Spend-management leader Ariba buys into HP server solutions

Management tools and HP product quality win multiple roles for HP server families

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"If you have a problem with a critical server at 9:30 at night, in the past you had to go back into the office to deal with it. With the HP BladeSystem, you can manage it completely from anywhere you have web access, including from home. Moreover, achieving this with only two staffers running hundreds of servers is key."

– Craig Kennedy, Senior Manager, Development IT, Ariba Inc.

Business needs:

Ariba is a leading provider of electronic procurement solutions. The company's technology offerings help companies analyze, understand, and manage their expenditures for greater cost savings and increased business process efficiency across the enterprise. Ariba's 200 software engineers are critical to those solutions, and the company's Development IT group makes sure those engineers have the resources they need to work efficiently and productively. With its business growing steadily, Ariba needed to upgrade its development hardware infrastructure, improve performance, and alleviate overcrowding in development labs. The engineers' needs were straightforward: They wanted unlimited computing resources, available at any time, and reconfigurable at the drop of a hat. Of course, these resources also needed to be highly cost effective, reliable, trouble free, and easy to manage.



Solution/results overview:

Ariba's Development IT group consolidated and standardized its server infrastructure around the HP BladeSystem. Thanks to efficient, powerful HP ProLiant server blades with Integrated Lights-Out (iLO) remote-management tools, Ariba realized important space savings, faster deployment of resources to users, and dramatically improved and simplified system management. This also allowed the Development IT team to manage hundreds of servers with a staff of only two system administrators.

HP and Ariba help each other achieve success

Ariba applications are on millions of desktops worldwide for spend management, in addition to bringing together buyers, partners, distribution channels, and more than 100,000 suppliers into the Ariba Supplier Network (ASN). HP and Ariba's longstanding, multifaceted relationship contributes to that success. In addition to the important role that the HP BladeSystem plays in Development IT:

- HP is one of Ariba's largest and most important technology infrastructure sources, providing a range of reliable, high performance systems to meet the different needs of several parts of Ariba's business.
- Ariba's corporate IT department standardized on HP ProLiant DL380 servers.
- The Ariba Supplier Network relies heavily on HP server infrastructure, employing HP 9000 PA-RISC-based servers to support the critical Oracle database layer. This function, which is supported under an HP Critical Service contract that includes an on-site HP high-availability team, is transitioning to HP ProLiant DL585 servers based on AMD Opteron™ technology.



In turn, the Ariba Supplier Network is an important component of spend-management programs that HP estimates saved \$600 million over three years. Additionally, as a seller on the Ariba Supplier Network, HP generates an estimated \$1 billion in orders annually.

Ariba Development IT checks out the competition

When it came time to upgrade its development hardware infrastructure, Ariba checked out several vendors. "Our development hardware was aging, and we needed more performance," explains Senior Manager of Development IT Craig Kennedy. "The point was that we had to buy something. We didn't want to get to a challenge a year or so down the road where we would have to replace 100 percent of our servers all at once. We wanted to replace 30 percent now, 30 percent in a year, and so on. We were also getting tight on space. The racks were getting full and overflowing."

The Ariba team looked at blade technology for its benefits in terms of redundancy, resource sharing, ease of management, simplified network and power cabling, and ease of deployment. Recalls Kennedy, "We started by looking at all major manufacturers. However, only HP had the desired combination of P4 Intel® Xeon® processors, fast SCSI bus, built-in RAID, detached power supply, and a good footprint. None of the other manufactures had this combination, so I chose HP."

HP ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack lives up to its name

The first batch of HP ProLiant server blades that Ariba purchased included 24 HP ProLiant BL20p G2 servers in three fully populated racks. "We were able to install the complete HP BladeSystem solution in a single day," reports Ariba Senior Systems Engineer Francois Bouchard. "Everything about the quality of the hardware and the whole BladeSystem rack-mount kit was really nice – including the design, the layout, and the superb level of quality."

The benefits of the HP BladeSystem solution quickly became evident to the development engineers as well. "The software development engineers – our customers – were very impressed," recalls Bouchard. "They saw faster performance and faster delivery of services. For example, if somebody said, 'We need four blades,' with the HP BladeSystem we could set up four machines in about three hours; that compares to about 36 hour for other systems. The upgrade took on a life of its own. Users went from saying 'I need a server' to 'I need a BladeSystem.' So we bought another bank of 40 HP ProLiant server blades."

BladeSystem solution saves space

Consolidating with HP ProLiant server blades solved a serious overcrowding situation. Ariba has four labs with 15 42U-high racks per lab. Before the switch to the HP BladeSystem, servers were starting to spill out into the hallways. Most of the servers Ariba replaced with HP

ProLiant server blades were 4U high. Explains Kennedy, "We found the compactness of the HP BladeSystem – along with simplified wire management and built-in server-management tools – very attractive. We went from 4U machines to .75U HP ProLiant BL20p servers, with 10 times the horsepower!"

Some HP ProLiant server blades replaced 13U machines that used up more than a quarter of a rack. Emphasizes Kennedy, "The leaner configurations meant we went from stuffed, to a situation in which we now have some empty racks."

Quality design pays big benefits

The Ariba team was especially impressed with the "out of the box" quality of the HP BladeSystem, and the product design that made the whole deployment process fast and efficient. Acknowledges Bouchard, "We can go from a box sitting on the shipping dock to up-and-running in a day. Before, it took a whole day just to get things out of the box, and more days to get things assembled, run wires, and roll out a server. With the HP BladeSystem hardware quality and design superiority, deployment is an order of magnitude easier."

Integrated Lights-Out management improves quality of life for system administrators

The management tools built into the HP BladeSystem allows Ariba to simplify management processes and automate previously manual administrative chores. That means administrators can focus on more productive tasks, rather than routine jobs.

The HP BladeSystem also makes life a good bit more enjoyable for the small team of system administrators, Kennedy attests: "The impact of the HP Integrated Lights-Out management is just stunning. We have a small staff managing a large number of servers, and they need to go home for dinner. In the past, if we had a problem with a critical server at 9:30 at night, they had to go back into the office to deal with it. With the HP BladeSystem you can manage the solution completely from anywhere you have web access, including from home. You can power it off, power it back on, and do everything you need to do. With only two staffers running several hundred servers, that is key."

Experience with the HP BladeSystem led the Development IT group to a broader commitment to HP technology. "It was a cultural change to HP based on the features, performance, and remote-management capabilities that HP gave us," maintains Kennedy. "We discovered after we installed the HP BladeSystem, we needed rack-mount servers for database servers, because they have more internal disk capacity, more spindles, which we needed for database servers. Because of our experience with the HP BladeSystem, we bought HP ProLiant DL380 servers with six disk drives each."

Ariba Supplier Network depends on reliable HP PA-RISC servers

Ariba's Spend Management software solutions integrate with the Ariba Supplier Network, an online clearinghouse that connects millions of buyers and sellers around the globe. The Ariba Operations Department, which manages the ASN, organizes hosted applications. The critical Oracle database layer runs on HP 9000 PA-RISC-based servers and the HP-UX 11i operating system.

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According to Principal Systems Administrator Rich Steenburg, "The Ariba Supplier Network is a 24x7 production shop through which flow billions of dollars of transactions every month. If the Oracle database goes down, the whole operation goes down. Reliability is absolutely critical."

HP 9000 PA-RISC servers have been meeting the reliability challenge for Ariba since first installed in 2000. Affirms Steenburg, "The HP PA-RISC servers are so valuable in our operation because, in my experience, they have never gone down. In the two-and-a-half years I've been here, I've never had a system crash, or a system go down without me taking it off line intentionally."

Manageability is another strong point for the PA-RISC-based HP 9000 servers. Explains Steenburg, "I can make significant changes to the system – make changes at the kernel level, add disks on the fly – without taking the system down, without interrupting production. That's a function of the HP-UX 11i operating system and the HP-UX Logical Volume Manager (LVM) that we use to manage the disks."

Currently, Ariba has 13 HP PA-RISC servers, which HP Services supports under a Critical Service contract. Steenburg is as positive about HP service as he is about HP product reliability: "If we ever have a problem, we get great support from HP under our service contract."

Critical Service, part of the HP Mission Critical Services portfolio, is a highly proactive service designed to help users avoid the causes of downtime, and includes HP's highest level of repair time commitment and an on-site availability team.

Transitioning to AMD Opteron-based HP servers

As part of its continuing technology refresh strategy, Ariba is transitioning support for the ASN Oracle database layer to ProLiant DL585 servers with AMD Opteron processors running the Red Hat Linux operating system. Ariba chose the HP ProLiant-Opteron solution for their next-generation technology based on their previous good experience with HP servers, their ongoing strong relationship with HP, and the extraordinary price/performance delivered by ProLiant DL585 servers.

Ariba has deployed nine HP ProLiant DL585 servers in a transition they started in May 2005 and expect to complete in 2006. "We looked at several 64-bit technologies," says Steenburg. "The AMD Opteron chip is blazingly fast, and the price/performance of the Opteron-based servers is remarkable."



About Ariba Inc.

Headquartered in Sunnyvale, California, Ariba (www.ariba.com) is the leading provider of Spend Management solutions to help companies realize rapid and sustainable bottom line results. Successful companies around the world in every industry use Ariba Spend Management software and services.

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At a glance

Hardware:

- 64 HP ProLiant BL20p G2 server blades
- 9 HP ProLiant DL380 servers
- 13 HP 9000 PA-RISC servers
- 9 HP ProLiant DL585 servers with AMD Opteron processors

Software:

- HP ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack (RDP)
- HP Integrated Lights-Out (iLO) technology
- HP Insight Manager
- HP-UX 11i operating system
- HP-UX Logical Volume Manager (LVM)
- Microsoft Windows 2000 operating system
- Microsoft Windows 2003 operating system
- Red Hat Enterprise Linux 3 operating system
- Oracle database

HP Services:

- Implementation support
- Critical Service hardware maintenance and support

Business needs

- Replace aging server infrastructure
- Free up overcrowded IT lab rack space
- Provide higher-performance systems to support IT development team
- Reduce deployment and reconfiguration time
- Provide easier to use management tools, relieve burden on overworked systems administrators

HP solution

- Install compact, high performance HP ProLiant server blades
- Employ HP rapid-deployment tools
- Deploy HP ProLiant DL380 servers to support database applications

Customer results

- Achieved higher performance
- Eliminated overcrowding in laboratory racks
- Reduced deployment time for new systems from several days to less than a day
- Decreased reconfiguration time from days to hours, allowing faster delivery of services to users
- Made server management easier and reduced burden on system administrators with HP Integrated Lights-Out management
- Allows system administrators to solve problems from anywhere in the world via remote-management tools

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