



SOFTWARE SLICES BAKERY MIGRATION PROBLEMS

SPECIALIZED SOLUTION SIMPLIFIES 3000 SHOP'S TRANSITION

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Migrations are going to earn a reputation over the next two years as the hardest work many HP 3000 shops have ever accomplished. 3000 sites don't have deep IT staffs, in many cases. That's why having a software solution work right out of the wrapper can be a blessing during the hard times of migration.

Dan Coyle, the VP of MIS at regional bakery Lewis Bakeries, had that "works as promised" experience with Viking Software's Viking Data Entry (VDE®) system. The applications hosted at the bakery's IT shop serve four different divisions. Some of the work is heads-down data entry, as Coyle calls it. The work flowed through DE/3000, a data-entry front end app whose vendor had gone out of business. The bakery found VDE for the HP-UX system that it's preparing to replace its HP 3000. But VDE eventually went to work in a Windows environment, one reason the software suits Coyle so well. Itanium's nuances didn't slow down the Viking solution — not like the Itanium problems that the two-person IT staff at Lewis had to knock out over the summer.

The Itanium-based HP-UX applications at Lewis Bakeries receive their data from VDE, Coyle said, using Samba as its intermediate file server mechanism. "You create a mapped drive under Samba and point your PC at that drive," Coyle explained. "When you click on that icon, it goes right into the Unix system. It's one of the cooler programs."

The architecture which lets a Windows software front-end serve HP-UX apps is an example of how a vendor with an established specialty, like Viking, can help 3000 shops set and forget some segments of a migration. Lewis has a lot of segments to consider when moving its application, created in 1989.

The bakery's payroll, inventory, order entry and other applications required a double-key entry software product that performed in a similar manner to the older DE/3000 product. Coyle said he'd last seen an upgrade of DE3000 in 1994. VDE stepped in without problems.

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"We still do heads-down data entry, and we needed a package on the Unix side to cover that," Coyle said. "VDE fit it quite well. It's one of the few packages in this migration that worked without having to do a whole lot of work on it. This migration's been a monster."

Coyle had planned to run VDE under HP-UX; data entry staff would access VDE with terminal emulation software on their PCs. Larry Castell of Viking's support team suggested that VDE for Windows could be installed on the Itanium server, and run directly from

Windows workstations, making it easier for the operators to enter the necessary data without the need for terminal emulation.

Viking's solution came up pretty fast for the bakery. Coyle spent a couple of days learning the VDE development facility. When he completed the tutorial and started on his own jobs he picked up on the process easily. He reported that over the course of a weekend he completed the conversion of all of his 80 jobs to VDE. He was impressed with the fact that the software was installed and conversion completed in under a week. "VDE is the next best thing to sliced bread," he said, "and coming from a bakery, that is a pretty high compliment."

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Coyle has plans to finish his migration sometime next year, but said the snags in getting software bugs for HP-UX software ironed out on Itanium have kept the bakery from making its January, 2006 deadline.

"Just about all the software vendors in the world weren't ready for Itanium," Coyle said. The differences in the Itanium architecture gave software companies a challenge to support, he said. "Every other package we used had problems with [the Itanium server], except Viking's, which loved it," he said.