Customer Case Study:
Puregold Price Club, Inc.

Critical Issue

A major concern for Puregold Price Club is ensuring the 24/7 availability of its core merchandising application, JDA MMS, across its entire network of stores. The application is powered by a single production server, which already crunches more than three terabytes of data, a workload which is expected to increase with the addition of more stores next year. It is critical that this application receives and distributes data across the network continuously and accurately. Thus, the company needed a solution to constantly replicate data to a backup server so that they could be assured of fast recovery in the event of a crisis.

Results

- Continuous protection of data and transactions for all Puregold stores.

- Fast replication of all transactions to the backup server.

- Constant availability of its core application throughout the Puregold network of stores.

- Minimum data loss in the event of any unplanned production server downtime.

Technologies

- Assure iTERA HA

- JDA® MMS™ (Mass Merchandising System)

- IBM i production and remote backup servers

Company Name:
Puregold Price Club, Inc.

Headquarters:
Manila, Philippines

Industry:
Retail/Merchandise

Employees:
600 employees in 23 locations

Business Environment:

- One of the biggest players in the wholesale and retail industry in the Philippines operating 20 Puregold stores and four PriceSmart/S&R stores.

- A pioneer in the members-only supermarket experience; eventually it opened its doors to the buying public due to overwhelming response.

- First established in Metro Manila in 1988, Puregold has expanded to Pampanga, Laguna, Cavite and Bulacan.

- Centralized back-end IT infrastructure facilities, including its main production servers and software applications, in its head office in Manila, which connects to all its stores via a fully secured and integrated network.

Implementation Team:
Precisely

Precisely Products:
Assure iTERA HA

Business Challenge

To maintain price competitiveness in a cutthroat local retail industry, Puregold thrives on its smooth relationship with suppliers, taking advantage of discounts that are then passed on to customers to ensure competitive pricing. The company's core JDA MMS application covers all aspects of Puregold's merchandising including buying, price changes and back orders with suppliers.

Elbert Balcos, Puregold's IT manager, stressed: "We need JDA running every day, all the time; otherwise it would be difficult for us to operate with any business advantage. All aspects of our operations - from the moment an order to a supplier is placed, to the time it is delivered in the store and payment is made - all of it is controlled on JDA. So you can just imagine what would happen without it."

Mr. Balcos recalled an incident that occurred before the Assure iTERA HA solution was put in place, where some stores experienced downtime during one weekend and were unable to encode data, resulting in millions of pesos in losses from potential discounts alone.

Puregold runs its JDA application on an IBM i server, the main production server which currently handles more than three terabytes of data. The company wanted to make sure that planned downtime on this server was minimized and that they would avoid any loss of data by having a back-up server ready to take over for the main server in case of an emergency.

In establishing a "fool-proof" disaster recovery plan, and in anticipation of growing data processing requirements, the company decided to invest in a second IBM i server.

Solution

The company searched for a back-up and availability solution that could handle an application as robust as JDA. Mr. Balcos and his team evaluated a number of solutions before finally choosing Assure iTERA HA, primarily because of its outstanding remote journaling features that take full advantage of the data communication technology built into the IBM i servers.

Assure iTERA HA utilizes IBM's remote journaling and clustering technologies to provide fast and accurate replication, while providing reliable automation of the entire mirroring and management processes.

"Every transaction is recorded as a 'journal entry' by the main server and is then sent to the backup server using the remote journaling technology from IBM, explained Mr. Balcos. " Assure iTERA HA fully integrates with these remote journals and updates the back-up server database in realtime. Assure iTERA HA reads these journals directly and updates everything that happens, end-to-end." Mr. Balcos further noted, "With Assure iTERA HA, you can even define which exact applications, objects or directories you want replicated."

In case of any disaster or downtime on the production server, the backup server can take control of the system automatically. The backup server also has 3.5 terabytes of storage capacity provisioned, in preparation for even more stores to be connected to the network.

"We still do manual tape backups, but at least we feel comfortable because we have a backup server that's running the same application and can take over immediately during any unplanned outage or disaster," Mr. Balcos said.

Once implemented, the learning curve for Assure iTERA HA is very short; it took only a week of training before Puregold's three-member IT staff were able to fully manage the application on their own.

"You do not need to master IBM's operating system to learn Assure iTERA HA," he said. "Since we implemented it, we haven't encountered any problems. We can also contact technical support remotely, if we should need to."

More importantly, Mr. Balcos said acquiring Assure iTERA HA entailed significantly less investment than would have been required for competing backup solutions. "We are able to talk to customers of the other vendors and so we learned about operational issues they had encountered with their solutions, all of which, it turned out, were already addressed by Assure iTERA HA."

"We have the peace of mind that, in any event our main server goes down, the backup machine will be ready to take over automatically," Mr. Balcos concluded.

> "Before we implemented Assure iTERA HA, there was this danger of waking up one day and finding out that our system had crashed and we didn't have a backup system. It is critical for us to have a High Availability application like Assure iTERA running reliably and continuously."
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> — Elbert Balcos,
> IT manager for Puregold