Versora Uses Mono to Deliver

Windows to Linux Migration Product

O V E R V I E W

Versora provides software products and professional integration services that yield a cost effective and seamless transition path from Microsoft Windows to Linux. Versora's Progression Desktop product quickly moves "personalities" and data, including application settings, network shares, desktop settings and directory structures across operating systems and applications in a predictable and repeatable fashion to ensure a seamless transition to Linux.

B U S I N E S S C H A L L E N G E S

Versora developed their original Progression Desktop application using the .NET framework because of the many advantages .NET provides, including a consistent object-oriented programming environment, versioning control, safe execution of code, and an enhanced developer experience that is consistent across widely varying types of applications, such as desktop and Web-based applications.

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> Jon Walker
> CTO
> Versora

The .NET framework was Versora's platform of choice largely because they had significant expertise developing software on Windows. But the fast growing Linux desktop market presented Versora with a new green field opportunity that required the Versora code to run on Linux. With more than 85% of their code written in C# on Windows, the migration task appeared daunting. "At the time, we didn't have any specific Linux expertise, and we needed an easy way to migrate that code base without taxing our already overburdened developer resources" says Jon Walker, CTO of Versora. Further, because the young Linux desktop market is fragmented, the Versora product had to be able to support multiple Linux distributions.

Versora looked at many options, and initially settled on using Python for developing new code. As a multi-paradigm language that supports several styles of coding their developers were comfortable and efficient developing in Python. Still, without an easy way to migrate the existing C# code base, a long arduous task lay ahead of them.

"We knew about Mono and their open source implementation of the C# language and .NET runtime" says Walker. "At that time Mono 1.0 was just being released, and we switched over to Mono as soon as it was ready." Mono turned out to be a huge time saver for Versora as their developers were able to reuse their C# skills. As a result, no outside consultants were needed to complete the project, an option that Versora had been considering. Versora was able to port their existing code base to Mono in about two days, a task that Walker says would have taken 1-2 man years with Python.

Further, the Mono development environment significantly eases Versora's task of supporting new Linux distributions, with a new port taking only 3-4 days to complete. "Mono allows us to support 6-12 distros and a variety of versions. In addition, Mono provides an easy installation and usage environment and has some really nice support for the kinds of things you want to do on the Linux desktop."

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Walker. In fact, Versora is often contacted by Windows developers about the best way to develop on Linux, and Walker says they recommend Mono. "Whether migrating existing Windows applications or creating new applications, Mono is a great way to develop applications for Linux."

NOVELL SOLUTION

Although Novell offers assistance to developers using the Mono framework, Walker says that they had very little interaction with Mono team during their development phase because it just wasn't necessary. "We're not open source GNOME developers; we're developing a commercial application and using Mono turned out to be very straightforward. It just worked." Since then, Versora has become a Novell PartnerNet Technology partner and has already teamed with Novell on Windows to Linux migration efforts, particularly shifting from IIS to the Apache Web server running on SUSE Linux. And of course Versora will support Novell's new SLED10 platform, giving Novell customers an easy migration path from Windows to Linux on the desktop.

Novell and Versora have authored whitepapers on several migration topics, including

- Microsoft SQL Server to Databases Running on Linux
- Windows Desktop to Linux Desktop
- Windows IIS Web Server to Linux Apache Web Server
- Windows File and Print Server to Linux File and Print Server

These whitepapers are available at http://versora.com/support/documentation.php, and for more information visit the Versora website at www.versora.com.

R E SUL T S

For Versora, the benefits to using Mono were very concrete: reduced development time, reduced development costs, reduced maintenance costs, and faster time to market for new ports. "Mono allowed us to migrate our code base to Linux quickly and without the need to develop new programming skills or bring in outside expertise" says Walker. "We're looking forward to working with Novell on Windows to Linux desktop migration."