

ELAVON, INC.

Elavon keeps VMware® VIRTUALIZATION AT PEAK RELIABILITY with Stratus always-on availability

“Elevating payments ... worldwide.” You would expect a company using that tag line to treat the availability and reliability of its payment systems as a priority. When that enterprise is Elavon, you would be absolutely right.

Business Situation

Rated as the number one processing network by MasterCard® for speed, availability, and reliability, Elavon, Inc. provides end-to-end payment processing services to more than one million merchants in the United States, Europe and Canada.

Recently Elavon decided the time was right to leverage server virtualization, where possible, for the usual reasons, such as: consolidating workloads onto fewer physical servers, gaining more flexibility to provision applications, saving on energy costs, and increasing application availability during planned upgrades.

Exceptional reliability had to be part of the plan, however, when it came to virtualizing a number of customer-facing quality assurance (QA) and user-acceptance testing (UAT) applications. For this set of highly visible applications, Stratus ftServer systems and VMware Infrastructure 3 were chosen to assure the flawless operation the company sought. “Stratus ftServer systems and VMware are an ideal mission-critical combination,” said Frank Bolling, vice president of systems and technology.

Quick Facts

Solution Profile

- Sustains industry-leading availability and reliability
- Handles end-to-end payment processing
- Serves more than one million merchants internationally
- Uses VMware virtualization for customer-facing test and support applications

Products

- Stratus® ftServer® systems
- VMware Infrastructure 3
- Microsoft® Windows Server® operating system
- Stratus ftServer V Series and Continuum® systems
- Stratus VOS operating system

Services

- Stratus support services
- Stratus professional services





“You can’t argue with the availability, and the customer service is second to none. We’ve had a productive relationship with Stratus.”

Frank Bolling

Vice President of Systems and Technology
Elevon, Inc.

Business Objectives

The words “mission critical” define Elevon’s business needs:

- Support payment products with the most reliable network in the industry
- Handle transactions from thousands of international locations, 24/7/365
- Incorporate redundancy into every processing system across the enterprise
- Obtain the right availability, with the right performance, at the right price
- Benefit from virtualization wherever practical

The Stratus Availability Solution

Elevon’s long history with Stratus servers instilled the necessary confidence to move ahead with virtualizing the QA and UAT applications. The company started using Stratus Continuous Availability Servers™ not long after its founding in 1991 as NOVA Information Systems in Atlanta.

Like earlier generations of Stratus systems the company has used, their newest fault-tolerant ftServer systems are engineered with Continuous Processing® features—lockstep redundant hardware, fail safe system software, and ActiveService™ capabilities—that ensure always-on availability and protect data integrity. Applications need not be modified in any way to benefit from this availability protection. The ftServer family has surpassed 99.999% availability at customer sites worldwide.

Unlike clustered servers that are more complex to configure and manage, always-on availability technologies are built into the hardware, system software, and proactive availability management features found in every Stratus system. Processing continues uninterrupted, even in the event of a component failure, without downtime or data loss. That gives the Elevon IT team a simpler way to meet their mandate to incorporate fail-safe redundancy into payment processing and key customer-facing systems.

“It’s better for the administrator to have the availability controlled by the hardware and system software at a microcode and firmware level,” said Bolling.

Most of Elevon’s Stratus Continuous Availability Servers are ftServer systems running the Microsoft® Windows Server® operating system. Some of these servers drive customer-facing QA and UAT applications; others run e-commerce and gift card applications.

The company continues to use Stratus Continuum and ftServer V Series systems to run its trusted payment authorization application based on the Stratus VOS operating system. “The VOS-based authorization system written by the founders here is one of the best applications I’ve ever been involved with. It’s one of the reasons that we’ve been recognized by MasterCard as the best processor in the industry,” Bolling stated.



“Stratus’ proven reliability gave us the confidence to proceed with virtualizing our critical customer-facing test and support applications.”

Frank Bolling

Vice President of Systems and Technology
Elavon, Inc

Business Impact

Elavon’s business has grown and changed since its early days, as has the technology the company uses to enable it. Today, for the appropriate QA and UAT applications, virtualization enables fast and flexible provisioning and minimizes the need to acquire additional physical servers—yet still delivers the assurance that Elavon customers will experience the reliability and performance they expect.

Not only have the Stratus Continuous Availability Servers lived up to their always-on availability promise, but also they have kept total cost of ownership (TCO) under control because of the redundant components built into every Stratus system. What’s more, this level of redundancy is achieved without doubling the software license fees, as would be the case for any software that requires active/active licensing on a cluster.

“Virtualizing the QA and UAT applications has helped us reduce costs over a non-virtualized environment, and the Stratus ftServer systems increase protection against the unplanned downtime that would cause our customers to lose confidence and put business at risk,” Bolling said.

Stratus service has executed to the same high standard. Since day one, Stratus Support Services have provided 24/7/365, proactive availability protection together with the Continuous Availability Servers’ self-monitoring and automatic problem reporting. Elavon’s IT team has also called on the expertise of Stratus Professional Services to handle tasks such as performance analysis and application development support over the years.

About Stratus Technologies

In today’s always-on world, applications run under increasingly demanding circumstances. With these escalating demands comes greater pressure to prevent even the smallest amount of application downtime. Companies are responding to this need for always-on solutions by searching for technologies that either conform to or enhance their current IT infrastructures.

Stratus Technologies’ solutions enable rapid deployment of always-on infrastructures, from enterprise servers to clouds, without any changes to your applications. Stratus products (software and servers) combined with Stratus people, enable customers to prevent downtime before it occurs, ensuring uninterrupted 24/7/365 performance of essential business operations.

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