

HP and Microsoft® deliver a cutting-edge solution

Epicurean Cutting Surfaces relies on HP ProLiant servers and the Microsoft Windows® Small Business Server to propel business growth



“Overall, we have paid back our initial investment in less than one year. This is huge when you’re aiming at having a sustainable business model that really performs well. Now we have a reliable way to grow that gives us savings we can put back into the business.”

—Dave Benson, Co-founder and CFO, Epicurean Cutting Surfaces



HP customer case study: energy efficiency, remote management

Industry: retail and distribution

Objective

Find a single powerful server and software package to efficiently run all of the company’s computerized manufacturing, financial, and messaging systems

Approach

Deploy efficient, powerful, and expandable HP ProLiant ML350 server with Microsoft Windows Small Business Server through the Technology Adoption Program

IT improvements

- 95% savings in backup time
- 100% success rate in backups compared to 70% previously
- Ability to recover files in minutes
- 100% savings in not having to use separate backup software
- 50% to 70% reduction in data center visits
- Ability to monitor systems remotely
- Energy consumption minimized due to small server footprint

Business outcomes

- Remote management solution provides competitive edge
- Partitioning HP server and Microsoft software package saves cost of additional server and many software packages
- Small IT infrastructure helps conserve energy, money, data center space, and time



Make no waste

From building skateboard parks to manufacturing culinary cutting boards to making outdoor furniture—it has been a fascinating progression in the manufacturing philosophy of three former skateboarders with a passion for green environmental practices. Founded by Tony Ciardelli, Greg Benson, and Dave Benson in 1997 in collaboration with TrueRide, the Skatepark manufacturer, Epicurean Cutting Surfaces and Loll Designs (Epicurean) are built on one principle: make no waste.

Based in Duluth, MN, the two companies operate as one with 40 employees who shift between one company and the other in the course of a day's work, wasting no time. Epicurean Cutting Surfaces makes the cutting boards and Loll Designs makes the outdoor furniture. The cutting boards were literally cut from the same sturdy, smooth material that made the skateboard parks, and the outdoor furniture is manufactured from recycled milk jugs.

Both companies have seen phenomenal growth since 2003 when they began to make cutting boards. Starting with one culinary store in Duluth, the products are now in 5,000 stores in 30 countries, thanks to fine design and craftsmanship and the quality of the material that the company uses.

"We're 100 percent dependent upon our server functioning all of the time."

—Dave Benson, Co-founder and CFO,
Epicurean Cutting Surfaces

Building a green IT infrastructure

Epicurean carries its philosophy of lean manufacturing right into the IT department, which is based largely on HP ProLiant ML350 G5 Server hardware and Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2008—the ideal combination for handling most of the business systems of the two companies with no wasted space or energy.

Customer solution at a glance

Primary hardware

- 1 HP ProLiant ML350 G5 Server
- 1 HP ProLiant ML350 G4 Server

Primary software

- HP Integrated Lights-Out 2 (iLO 2) Advanced Management

Operating system

- Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2008

The lean combination of hardware and software evolved from a process of trial and error that began on a Dell PowerEdge 2850 platform. "We ran out of disk space and we ran out of luck with the machine around the same time," says Lucas Mistelske, IT director. "The Dell system broke down and Dell wasn't in a big rush to fix it."

The company cannot function without the server that handles both its business and manufacturing processes. Computer numerically controlled (CNC) machines cut out product components from instructions that come from the server. "We're 100 percent dependent upon our server functioning all of the time," says Dave Benson, CFO and co-founder.

“We’d have to buy two servers to give us the disk space and the performance that one ProLiant ML350 gives us. We’ve loaded it up with everything we can think of and it’s still running faster than we ever dreamed.”

—Lucas Mistelske, IT Director, Epicurean Cutting Surfaces

About Epicurean Cutting Surfaces

Epicurean Cutting Surfaces and sister company Loll Designs manufacture cutting boards and outdoor furniture from recycled materials. Both companies, based in Duluth, Minnesota, are passionately committed to lean manufacturing and green environmental practices.

Disaster relief from HP

The disaster led to a shift to HP in 2005 with the release of the HP ProLiant ML350 G4 Server and Microsoft Windows Small Business Server. “Imagine driving a car where you feel like the wheels are going to fall off and then changing to driving something that you know you’re safe in,” says Mistelske. “You know it’s just solid and it’s there for you.”

The IT infrastructure was stabilized and the company soared through a period of triple- and double-digit growth. Then came an invitation to participate in the HP and Microsoft Technology Adoption Program (TAP) for Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2008. The opportunity came through Compudyne, Epicurean’s IT partner for systems monitoring and support. The offer came with an HP ProLiant ML350 G5 Server with Intel® Xeon® E5345 processors and 8 gigabytes of memory.

“The outstanding engineering of the HP ProLiant server combined with its density and speed make it a natural fit for the Small Business Server,” says Brad Schow, general manager, Compudyne.

Microsoft Windows Small Business Server 2008 would provide many of the features used by larger companies, such as e-mail, Internet connectivity, internal websites, remote access, support for mobile devices, file and printer sharing, backup, and restore.



Catching air with HP ProLiant ML350 G5 Server

Epicurean jumped on the chance to top what they had achieved with the hardware and software combination that had been working so well.

“We partitioned the G5 into two logical disks and we’re running Small Business Server on one side, and most of our office and CAD applications on the other,” says Mistelske. “Now we’re also using the existing hardware we had on hand to run our Blackberry application and the file and print server. We’re spreading the risk around and using existing resources because that’s how we do business.”

The hardware setup has turned out to be an extremely economical and efficient choice.

“We’d have to buy two servers to give us the disk space and the performance that one ProLiant ML350 gives us,” says Mistelske. “We’ve loaded it up with everything we can think of and it’s still running faster than we ever dreamed.”

With the ProLiant ML350, Mistelske got the Integrated Lights-Out 2 (iLO2) Advanced Management package that provides the ability install, configure, monitor, update, and troubleshoot the server from anywhere, anytime. The feature lets him cut down on data center visits by as much as 70 percent—a big energy savings. That includes both gas and miles for trips to the office and running up and down stairs at the Duluth building. It saves from 10 minutes to half an hour for each visit he doesn’t have to make.

No lollygagging with Microsoft Windows Small Business Server

The features of Microsoft Windows Small Business Server running on the HP ProLiant ML350 have provided lots of benefits as well.

The easy-to-use remote access capability enables users to log on to their desktops from outside the office and work with all the applications that they would have normally. "Being able to provide this feature to our national sales manager has proven to be very powerful in helping him negotiate a major deal while visiting a prospective customer," says Mistelske.

"It used to take three days to backup to tape with Symantec Backup Exec. Now a full backup takes three and three-quarters of an hour."

—Lucas Mistelske, IT Director, Epicurean Cutting Surfaces

The company has also improved data protection with the new backup support built into Microsoft Windows Small Business Server. It enables data to be easily copied directly to portable hard disks, which are

rotated offsite. "It used to take three days to backup to tape with Symantec Backup Exec," says Mistelske. "Now a full backup takes three and three-quarters of an hour."

"That's a 95 percent time savings in time and 100 percent cost avoidance by not needing Backup Exec. What's more, we're having a 100 percent success rate with our backup jobs—as opposed to 70 percent with the previous tape solution."

In addition, Mistelske can recover files for users in minutes. Previously there was no time to do that because backups were taking so long.

Payback in less than one year

"If we'd had to purchase the HP ProLiant server, we would have paid back our investment in less than one year," says Benson. "This is huge when you're aiming at having a sustainable business model that really performs well. Now we have a reliable way to grow that gives us savings we can put back into the business. With the HP G5 server and the Microsoft Windows Small Business Server package we can keep up the momentum we've achieved so far."



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