

Virgin Money

Virgin Money invests in cutting-edge technology from IBM

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A division of the Virgin Group, Virgin Money (virginmoney.com) is one of the UK's leading online financial services providers, and has recently expanded its operations to cover the Australian market, too. Virgin Money aims to be a 'one-stop' shop, providing a comprehensive range of financial products, from savings accounts to pensions and insurance. The company states that its goal is simple: to offer customers a better combination of choice, value and service than any other company.

Customer Choice

Following the successful launch of the Virgin credit card, traffic on Virgin Money's Web site increased significantly. When the company looked to refresh its IT infrastructure, scalability was therefore a key factor, as Andy Makings, Senior Infrastructure Analyst, explains: "We weren't experiencing any performance problems with our existing Web servers, but we knew that they would be expensive to scale up. We realised that blade servers would best suit our needs, and we reviewed the latest offerings from IBM, HP and RLX."

Sharper Service

Following an internal evaluation, Virgin Money chose IBM BladeCenter as its new front-end Web server, replacing three Sun E420 servers, which have been moved to the application tier below. The IBM solution runs Red Hat Linux and Apache Web server software, and consists of two BladeCenters, hosted by Energis in separate locations. Each BladeCenter contains five xSeries server blades with Intel® Pentium®4 processors and 512MB of memory.

Content is generated dynamically by application servers in the tier below, based on user input and data sourced from an Oracle database, then pushed up to the Apache Web servers on BladeCenter. Makings says, "We selected the IBM blade solution because we knew that it would be easy to scale up, and because we wanted to take advantage of the ease of management it offered. Moving to Linux will enable us to reduce long-term costs, and we are likely to migrate other strategic systems, too."

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