Dexia Bank invests in HP BladeSystem and Thin Client technologies to build "Branch of Tomorrow"

"With HP, our bank branches gained a powerful infrastructure that meets their needs precisely. We predict the HP solution will yield large savings benefits, too."

– Lahouari Bouhjar, System Architect and Branch of Tomorrow Project Manager, Dexia Bank

Executive summary:
When Dexia Bank launched its "Branch of Tomorrow" retail banking initiative, its goals were to:

• reduce the size and complexity of the bank's technology operations

• decrease maintenance costs

• simplify access to applications and data

• consolidate and centralize IT resources and applications in the bank's data center

• use the "lightest" possible computing technology in the bank's branches

Dexia Bank's old system was not meeting business needs. Each branch bank had one Dell server, along with PCs on desktops. Because the primary applications were running under UNIX on IBM computers in the data center, the "heavy" branch office servers were underutilized. At the same time, operating and supporting them was complex and costly.

With the Branch of Tomorrow project, Dexia consolidated its legacy client/server architecture into a centralized architecture based on 300 HP BladeSystem servers in the bank's data center and 6000 HP Thin Clients in its branches. The solution also incorporates Citrix MetaFrame Presentation Server software 3.0, which provides local and remote users with secure access to virtualized client/server applications from any location, device, or connection. The new infrastructure enabled Dexia to eliminate the 1,100 costly legacy servers in its branches. In addition, the Branch of Tomorrow includes a Mobile Office component – built with HP Notebook PCs and Deskjet printers – to enable staff to conduct sales calls anywhere, anytime, within legal restrictions.

European bank shows strong interest in HP infrastructure
Dexia initiated the Branch of Tomorrow project in October 2004 with a study of the infrastructure it would need to meet its key goals of reducing costs while increasing mobility, ease of access, ease of use, and manageability. The strategy they chose to meet these goals was to deliver applications and services to the branches using Citrix MetaFrame Presentation Server software running on HP BladeSystem servers in the data center. Dexia divided this large project into three major parts:

• new data-center technology to replace branch servers

• new branch-office desktop technology that would be easier to use and support

• new mobile-computing solution

Relates Dexia System Architect and Branch of Tomorrow Project Manager Lahouari Bouhjar:

• "From December 2004 through June 2006, we built a totally different infrastructure, changing all the major components in 18 months."

• "The branches are very happy with what we have accomplished with the help of these HP solutions. They tell us, 'Now we have a powerful infrastructure.'"

HP BladeSystem delivers dividends for data center

The centerpiece of the project is 300 HP BladeSystem servers running Citrix in the Dexia data center. The solution replaces 1,100 branch office servers, reducing support and management costs. For instance, there was no local support in the branch offices so servers required costly site visits for repairs and maintenance. The Citrix MetaFrame architecture provides a simple and powerful way to access content and applications. Says Bouhjar:

• "In the data center we needed to put as many Citrix sessions as possible on one server, and thus reduce the number of servers needed. The performance of the HP BladeSystem server blades was superior in that regard."

• "Another factor in favor of choosing HP for the data center server blades was that we were already successfully using HP BladeSystem servers for headquarters operations. It made sense to work with only one vendor at the headquarters location."

Dexia invests in HP Thin Clients for branches

HP proposed the HP Compaq t5720 Thin Client with the AMD Geode™ NX 1500 processor to meet Dexia's performance and cost requirements for the new branch office computers. Dexia evaluated a number of different thin clients Bouhjar states:

• "The primary evaluation criteria included the power to deliver content, such as videos, as well as superior manageability. We selected HP not only on the basis of the fast speed of the AMD processor, but also the high-performance video card built into the t5720 Thin Client."

• "Other vendors had powerful processors, but not the video card; or they had a good video card, but not good manageability. The HP Thin Clients had the whole package."

• "When we added up the scores for all criteria, HP had the highest score and won the deal for 6,000 Thin Clients for the branch offices."

The Branch of Tomorrow Mobile Office enables bank staff to go to customers' homes and securely access applications and information, within legal restrictions. HP Services provided design, assembly, rollout, and maintenance for the Mobile Office, which includes an HP Deskjet 460 printer and an HP Compaq nc6220 Notebook PC.

New infrastructure pays big dividends in mobility

The new infrastructure gives Dexia staff greater mobility to move from branch to branch, to make sales calls in customers' homes, and to work from their own home computers. In the past, when product specialists moved from one branch to another, they could not access local data stored on the server in their assigned branch. Now, agents can access the data they need – from any branch.

The HP Mobile Office lets a bank representative take the bank to the customer's home – with the ability to access applications and marketing information, and print documents such as product descriptions, cost data, or contracts, within legal restrictions. The new architecture also allows bank staff to work from home by providing Citrix MetaFrame access from their home computers to the same applications available in the branch offices.

HP solutions account for easier banking

The new banking infrastructure provides consistent, easy-to-use access to applications and information throughout the Dexia banking network. Explains Bouhjar:

• "It is confusing to have different ways to access the bank network. Now, the access process is always the same, from branches, the Mobile Office, or at home. The user goes to a Web gateway, uses a browser and a digital identification pass, and starts a session of

Citrix MetaFrame Presentation Server. From then on, the user can go anywhere in the system in the same Citrix session, and does not have to log in again."

- "With easy to use HP Thin Clients, workers in branches can concentrate on their job, which is selling products to customers, not doing PC maintenance. Before, they had to worry about application installation, backups, and all that technical stuff. Now they don't!"

> "We chose HP on the basis of the performance of HP BladeSystem servers running Citrix, the power of the HP Thin Client technology, and our previous good experience with HP products and service."
>
> – Lahouari Bouhjar, System Architect and Branch of Tomorrow Project Manager, Dexia Bank

- Before we had technicians going to the branches. Now if there is a problem with a Thin Client, someone unplugs it and plugs in another one…that's it. No tech visit, no down time."

- "When we receive the Thin Client it is ready for us to do a few settings and plug and play." HP Services pre-stages the Thin Clients, delivering them with the Microsoft® Windows® XP operating system and, the Citrix client software installed, along with other specific components and changes required by Dexia on the standard HP XPe image.

HP Infrastructure pays excellent rate of return
The Branch of Tomorrow project has already delivered hard savings in terms of reduced support costs, and Dexia anticipates further savings in the future. Bouhjar reports:

- "Thin Clients have no fans and no disks, which are the two largest sources of problems for PCs. Therefore we expect a large reduction in the number of problems." Calls from the branches to the internal Dexia Help desk will decrease substantially, allowing Dexia to reduce Help desk staff.

- "In the past, if a server went down it was usually down for hours. The resiliency and redundancy built into the HP BladeSystem technology make these potential business continuity problems disappear."

- "We expect savings benefits in IT costs." Because the infrastructure in the branches is now very simple, Dexia has re-negotiated their current contract and cut costs. When the current contract ends, the bank will negotiate an entirely new contract (with no severs in the branches). After that, Dexia anticipates savings that will allow them to invest in new functionalities in the branches -- without new budget.

About Dexia Bank
Dexia Bank was created in 1996 through the alliance of the two major European players in local public finance: Crédit Local in France and Crédit Communal in Belgium. Dexia was one of the first cross-border mergers in the European banking sector and, by 2005, was one of the top 15 banking groups in the Eurozone. Dexia operates in three principal markets: local public institutions, the retail market, and the financial market. In local public finance, the bank occupies a leading position on a world scale. In the retail market, Dexia is a first-class retail bank in Belgium, Luxembourg, Slovakia, and now Turkey, offering a complete range of banking services to its domestic clientele. In the financial market, Dexia is a major player, through its joint venture with Royal Bank of Canada, and in the top 10 worldwide for fund administration.

Dexia Bank invests in HP BladeSystem and Thin Client technologies to build "Branch of Tomorrow"

At a glance

Hardware

- 6,000 HP Compaq t5720 Thin Clients for 1,100 branch offices

- 300 HP ProLiant BL20p server blades running Citrix in the bank data center

- HP-designed and developed Mobile Offices, which include HP Deskjet 460 printers and HP Compaq nc6220 Notebook PCs

Software

- HP ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack (RDP)

- Microsoft System Management Server (SMS)

- Microsoft Windows XP embedded operating system

- Citrix MetaFrame Presentation Server 3.0

HP Services

- Designed, developed, and deployed the Mobile Office solution

- Provides support services for server blades and Mobile Office

Challenge

- Consolidate and centralize information resources in bank's data center

- Reduce technology operations and maintenance costs in branch banks

- Deliver equal or better banking services in branches while reducing costs

- Improve mobility, ease of access, ease of use, and manageability

- Enable full access to all appropriate bank information resources to associates in every branch whose access was limited previously to local data

- Develop and deliver a mobile computing solution to enable agents to go to customers' homes and access applications

Solution

- Consolidation and centralization of application resources, replacing 1,100 servers in branches with 300 HP BladeSystem servers in the data center running Citrix MetaFrame Presentation Server software and providing access to applications, data, and file, print, and email services

- Simplification of branch operations, replacing 6,000 PCs with 6,000 HP Compaq t5720 Thin Clients in 1,100 branch offices

- Providing bank staff mobility to go the customer using HP-designed and developed Mobile Office solution

- HP Services support for BladeSystem server blades and the Mobile Office solution

- HP ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack (RDP) Support Services

Results

- Consolidation makes data center the single source for info/resources

- HP Thin Clients in branches simplify operations and cut maintenance costs

- Bank agents have easy, consistent access to all IT resources from any branch

- Mobile Office enables agents to bring the bank to customers' homes

- HP BladeSystem & HP Thin Clients = higher reliability, lower cost, easier management

- Lower costs allow investment in new branch functionality without additional budget

For more information on how working with HP can benefit you, contact your local HP representative, or visit us at www.hp.com.