



"In case of a failure somewhere down the line, our applications need to be back up in no more than 60 minutes."

Bernard Guyot, Head of IT Systems and Networks
Casino Group

Business Profile

Company name:
Casino Group

Headquarters:
Saint-Etienne, France

Revenues:
366 million Euros

Industry:
Food retail

Employees: 165,000

Business Environment:

- Founded in 1898
- Among the world's largest food retailers
- Operates more than 6,600 supermarkets and restaurants
- 17 company warehouses
- Shop-clerk mascot well known in France states that "Je suis partout, Je vends de tout" ("I am everywhere, I sell everything")

Vision Solutions Product:
MIMIX® HA for i5/OS®

Critical Issue

Keeping huge amounts of retail goods flowing to its stores is the main task for Casino. Any downtime would have dramatic consequences for its long and complex supply chains. The sales outlets utterly depend on timely and accurate deliveries. Casino's IT team must ensure that the company's 17 warehouses have constant access to their data and applications to ensure that the business does not come to a sudden standstill.

Results

- Maintains 24/7 business continuity for logistics and warehouse management.
- Recovery in 60 minutes or less in the event of a system failure.
- Achievement of maximum resiliency and availability for critical applications and data.
- Regular customers' favorite products are on Casino's shelves when they need them.

Technologies

- MIMIX® HA for i5/OS® from Vision Solutions
- Mission Critical Apps: Reflex™ and WCSS™
- IT Topology: Dual IBM® System i Model 820 four-way servers

Business Challenge

In Casino Group's warehouses, more than 350 users with very specific IT and logistics skills handle day-to-day management through their business applications: Reflex™ and WCSS™.

While every IT Department worries about disasters, Casino Group's IT team focuses on three much more likely scenarios: a server becomes inoperable, an application freezes, or the network suffers from overload. Any one of these would have dramatic consequences for the business and its thousands of regular customers.

Stores would not be stocked on time and if unhappy customers divert to a competitor's store, they may be lost for good. Under such circumstances, no company could afford to wait a day or more to repair the infrastructure and restore lost data. Business information must be available on a 24/7 basis, wherever and however a company's decision makers and workers need it.

"What we're talking about here is the monumental task of securing the availability of the Casino supply chain," explained Bernard Guyot, Head of Casino's IT Systems and Networks.



Solution

Casino decided to secure its warehousing and logistics management by installing an HA solution that would allow it to properly deal with any IT system downtime, planned or unplanned. Just three months earlier, in February 2000, Casino created Easydis, a subsidiary that today handles all the logistics for Casino.

Easydis centralized Casino's warehousing stock management onto two IBM® System i Model 820s with four processors each and 300GB of DASD capacity. Today, the subsidiary operates from 30 sites in France with over 3,000 staff handling 780,000 square meters of warehousing space.

Casino Group chose MIMIX® HA for i5/OS from Vision Solutions to carry out the critical task of securing continuous data and application availability. In France, Vision Solutions works in close collaboration with its longtime partner, GEAC France, one of France's top VARs for IBM® System i.

As the first step, GEAC, together with IBM® and Easydis, created an integrated team of experts to design, manage and complete the project. Once the initial MIMIX installation was completed, the first "Grand Test" was fired off shortly before the summer period, a high volume time for retailers characterized by a flurry of sales and special promotional campaigns. MIMIX came through without so much as a glitch.

To help ensure the solution's success, Vision Solutions organized a training course for Casino's IT team, both on-site and at its own premises. "As can be expected, the implementation program went extremely well, owing to the high competence level of the Vision Solutions team, IBM® and GEAC. The seamless integration of this solution in a retail environment matched Casino's needs perfectly," said Frédéric Douin, Business Manager of GEAC.

But the true value of the solution was proven the day that the production machine failed. "The emergency plan kicked into gear and we were back online within the set timeframe," Guyot explained. "We switched to the backup server and were back in business within 60 minutes. A huge technical success, yes, but more importantly, an operational success of immeasurable value in exact financial terms. Previously, we might have expected that our warehouse operations would have been down for as long as four hours in such a situation. The financial impact of such downtime is frightening to imagine – we are talking about huge sums here."

Today, Casino Group's solution runs on a platform of two IBM® System i servers, a primary server that runs production and another that is kept up-to-date by MIMIX as backup, connected through an Ethernet network. MIMIX is managing the replication of the primary server most efficiently. "Between the warehouses and the servers, everything is redundant," observed a happy Guyot.



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