

75% Of Seacoast Laboratory Data Systems' Clients Transition To MSM-Server For Windows NT Platform

by Paul Elswick

Every day millions of blood samples, urine specimens and possible cancerous tissues are submitted by individual physicians, medical groups and hospitals to thousands of reference laboratories in the U.S. for chemical analysis. A substantial number of these clinical laboratories rely on M-based systems to run their businesses and interface to lab equipment for data acquisition and analysis.

One of the leading suppliers of custom software for the industry is Dover, NH-based Seacoast Laboratory Data Systems, Inc. Founded in 1986, the company focuses exclusively on reference laboratories and is recognized for providing first-rate laboratory and financial systems, as well as hardware migration solutions.

VAXes "gasping for breath"

In the past year, a number of Seacoast's customers that were running DSM on VAX hosts began running into trouble. "Frankly," says John Herring, President of Seacoast, "their businesses were expanding at a rate that was leaving their older VAX machines gasping for breath. Companies running on the VAX with DSM inevitably find that they need more speed and much better response time. However, when they look at the cost of upgrading VAX hardware and software, it's just too expensive."

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Herring knew that his customers needed a better and less expensive migration solution. And he knew just what that solution should be: MSM-Server for Windows NT, from Micronetics Design Corp. "All in all," he explains, "it takes a lot less money to migrate to Windows NT than to a VAX of equal capabilities. With

the low cost of upgrading and the increased ease-of-use, it's easy to persuade our customers to upgrade to MSM-Server for Windows NT."

Coming up for air

One of Seacoast's customers, who has taken the Windows NT migration path, concurs: "We were amazed at the elegance of the solution when Seacoast first presented it," exudes Guy Seay, President and CEO of Clinical Diagnostics Services, located in Englewood, New Jersey. "And the results, especially in performance, have been outstanding."

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Seay's company originally operated a financial system on a VAX 4200, with a background billing process that took from 24 to 26 hours to complete. Seacoast initially migrated the company to MSM-Server for PC/Plus and reduced the run-time to only eight hours. "However, when we later migrated their system to MSM-Server for Windows NT, we didn't have to change a single line of code—the background process ran in under 35 minutes," Herring reports.

In total, Clinical Diagnostics Services had a cluster of three VAXes and one instrument interface machine, Herring adds. They moved from the VAXes to four PCs running MSM-Server for PC/Plus, two of which ran their financial applications and two which ran their laboratory applications. "Now, under MSM-Server for Windows," says Herring, "they have only one machine running their lab applications and another running their financial applications, along with two other machines that provide backup shadow copies of the databases, as well as the one instrument interface

machine. You don't have to do a lot of complicated arithmetic to add up the advantages."

Breathing room

Besides performance gains and cost savings, Herring also cites the benefits of MSM-Server for Windows NT in terms of freeing his clients to focus on their core business: "Companies ought to be able to treat their computers like vending machines, so they can concentrate on what they do best, which is to run a laboratory. By migrating from management-intensive VAX DSM systems to MSM-Server for Windows NT, "the entire middle level of system management just goes away, making it easier for companies to maintain their systems and focus on their businesses," he says.

So many of its clients have run into the same migration cul de sac with VAX DSM systems that 75% of Seacoast's customers have either already made the move to MSM-Server for Windows NT, or are in the process of making the transition. "We've had nothing but successes thus far," says Herring.

It's not your father's M Technology

Micronetics' MSM-Server for Windows NT is an advanced implementation of the M Technology development environment, with a suite of integrated application development tools and database management facilities. The product touts a flexible and scaleable architecture and includes high-availability features designed to support round-the-clock operations, among other features.

New horizons

Though Seacoast primarily develops and supports financial systems, virtually 100% of its clients have instrument data acquisition and analysis applications. "Now that some of the more mainstream database management vendors are making big marketing pushes into the non-IT marketplace—hooking their products up to such uses as telemetry monitoring and analysis, manufacturing processes, automated tracking and billing of utility usage, and so on—it's a bit ironic," Herring muses, "to realize that M Technology has been doing this kind of instrument data acquisition and processing for years—and doing it very efficiently."

But whether customized financial systems or non-IT instrument interface applications, Herring sees the Windows NT platform as being the one most ideal for M Technology: "When you add up the relative low cost of PCs, an operating system that is easy to run and maintain, and a high-performance database like Micronetics' MSM, you have a winner." **M**

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