

Menlove Toyota wins a technology makeover

Replacing outdated technology with HP BladeSystem delivers zero downtime



Menlove.com
"the last of the little guys"

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Scott D. Keeler, MBA, Administrator, Menlove Toyota Scion

HP customer
case study: SMB
solutions, data
center transformation
Industry: automotive
(dealership)

Objective

Replace legacy servers and software to support a new call center and bring e-mail administration in-house

Approach

Deploy HP BladeSystem and Microsoft® Windows® Essential Business Server

Business benefits

- Zero downtime since installation of HP BladeSystem
- Projected 30% increase in call center productivity
- E-mail accounts added in minutes vs. days
- Calendar sharing now an option
- 100% availability for financing software (improved from 93%)

IT improvements

- IT administrator now focused on more strategic tasks



A call for help

These are challenging times for automotive dealerships. Credit's tight, consumers are strapped for cash, and a wait-and-see attitude toward hybrids and alternative fuel vehicles is causing many would-be buyers to delay car purchases.

For dealerships that need to operate leaner and meaner than ever before in order to survive, running the business on outdated technology is a major risk—a fact that Scott D. Keeler, MBA, administrator at Menlove Toyota Scion in Bountiful, Utah, knows very well. In addition to other responsibilities at the dealership, Keeler is Menlove's de facto IT manager, which by 2008 was threatening to become a full-time job in itself.

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“We had a lot of old equipment,” he says. “We had virus attacks. We had a primary server go down for two days. Our e-mail was hosted, and we had very little administrative control. We really needed to rebuild our infrastructure from the ground up.”

A major technology upgrade wasn’t in the dealership’s operating budget, so Keeler took matters into his own hands and entered the IT Midmarket Makeover contest sponsored by HP, Microsoft, and AMD.

An infrastructure in a box

Much to Keeler’s surprise and delight, his essay describing Menlove’s plans for enhanced technology—and compelling photo of the dealership’s existing “server room”—won the contest. One otherwise normal work day, he was greeted by a gift-wrapped HP BladeSystem c3000 Enclosure featuring four HP ProLiant BL465c server blades. Designed specifically for midsize businesses, the c3000 “Shorty” enclosure consolidates the essential elements of a data center—power, cooling, management, connectivity, redundancy, and security—into a small, manageable footprint.

The server blades run Microsoft Windows Essential Business Server 2008 Premium Edition, an enterprise-class operating system and software platform designed to provide midsize businesses with an all-in-one solution.

“Windows Essential Business Server 2008 gives us the security, management, messaging, and database server all in one. It’s an infrastructure in a box,” says Keeler. “And the HP BladeSystem gives us the expandability we need to grow the business. This is cutting-edge technology—not a lot of dealerships can compete with our new infrastructure.”

Zero downtime with the HP BladeSystem

For service and support on the solution, Menlove relies on HP Partner Canon Business Solutions. “We haven’t run into any questions yet that Canon can’t answer,” says Keeler. “They were very helpful in getting everything up and running and properly configured.”

If Canon’s engineers need to check the status of Menlove’s servers or perform administration tasks, they have the option of connecting remotely using HP Integrated Lights-Out 2 (iLO 2) software, a feature of HP Insight Control Environment (ICE) for BladeSystem. Using this tool allows Canon to provide faster response, save trips to the dealership, and avoid disrupting business activities at Menlove.

Keeler is able to take care of most routine server maintenance himself, however, using HP management tools. “The Onboard Administrator for the HP BladeSystem enclosure and HP Systems Insight Manager on the server blades provide us with a broad and deep view of what’s going on, and the interfaces are very intuitive,” Keeler reports.

One HP GbE2c Ethernet Blade Switch provides a full set of industry standard Gigabit Ethernet Layer 2 features, while an HP StorageWorks SB40c storage blade provides over 500 gigabytes of capacity.

“That’s five times as much space as we had on our old systems,” says Keeler. “We won’t need to expand our storage for a long time. Cabling is much cleaner now. And we haven’t had any downtime since the HP BladeSystem was installed.”

Increasing call center productivity by 30 percent

The new infrastructure will help Menlove take advantage of an upgraded, expanded call center, currently under construction, in its new 120,000 square-foot facility. "The goal is to centralize customer relations in a large 65-workstation room utilizing Microsoft Windows Terminal Services and HP t5630 Thin Clients running Microsoft Windows XP Embedded," Keeler explains. "There will be enough room for sales staff to make their calls alongside a dedicated team of call-center professionals. The increased speed and manageability we'll gain from this arrangement will help us increase our phone call and appointment ratios by as much as 30 percent. With the server equipment we had previously, this would not have been possible."

Taking control of e-mail

Using Microsoft Windows Essential Business Server (EBS), Menlove is now able to host and administer its own e-mail with Microsoft Exchange Server 2007, included in EBS. In the past, the dealership used a hosted service that, while usually reliable, did not allow for timely changes or additions of new e-mail accounts.

"Especially in tough times, we need the best salespeople on the floor that we can get, and it doesn't look very professional if we're unable to get new hires set up with an e-mail account right away, on their first day of work," says Keeler. "We used to wait a couple of days sometimes for our hosting provider to add a new account. Now I can do it in minutes. E-mail is increasingly how business gets done in this industry, and we can't afford to have lag time. Now we're in control."

Menlove employees also appreciate the ability to share calendars in Microsoft Outlook, now that all staff computer users are standardized on Microsoft Office 2007 productivity tools. "We can collaborate easier, and that's of great benefit to us," says Keeler.



Deal or no deal?

In the car business, the availability of financing is often what makes or breaks a deal. True to its slogan, "the last of the little guys," Menlove maintains an in-house financing department so it can be as flexible as possible in working with customers. "We write our own car loans and are basically the lender for those deals," Keeler explains. "And that department has its own proprietary software that's mission critical. If that piece is down, they can't do anything."

The HP, Microsoft, and AMD solution has improved availability for that application from 93 percent to 100 percent. "We had it on an old IBM server previously, and the program kept stalling," recalls Keeler. "We had to restart the server four to five times during each 12-hour sales day, and every time it would take 10 minutes after the reboot to get the application back online. We migrated the software over to the HP BladeSystem, and we haven't had a problem with it since."

About Menlove Toyota

Founded in 1962, Menlove Toyota Scion (www.menlove.com), "the last of the little guys," serves the Salt Lake City market from its brand-new facility in Bountiful, Utah. The dealership's 120 employees take a personalized approach to new and pre-owned car sales.

A gracious winner

Thanks to its technology improvements, Menlove is well-positioned to negotiate the current bumps in the road and ride the next economic upswing—because America's need for reliable transportation and solid customer service isn't going away.

"I'd like to thank the IT Midmarket Makeover contest for selecting Menlove Toyota Scion as the 2008 makeover winner and giving us this opportunity," Keeler concludes. "It's already made a huge difference, and we're just getting started."

Customer solution at a glance

Hardware

- HP BladeSystem c3000 Enclosure
- HP ProLiant BL465c server blades
- HP GbE2c Ethernet Blade Switch for c-Class BladeSystem
- HP StorageWorks SB40c storage blade
- HP t5630 Thin Clients

Software

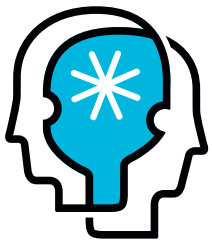
- HP Insight Control Environment (ICE) for BladeSystem, including:
 - HP Integrated Lights-Out 2 (iLO 2) Advanced Pack
 - HP Onboard Administrator
 - HP Systems Insight Manager
- Microsoft Office 2007

Operating systems

- Microsoft Windows Essential Business Server 2008 Premium
- Microsoft Windows XP Embedded

HP Partner

- Canon Business Solutions



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