



Ping An Insurance lays the foundation for business growth

Exceeding service level agreements by 20 percent with high performance from IBM System x

Overview

The need

Ping An Insurance wanted to increase its market share in a competitive industry. To achieve this, the company needed to improve its customer services—but its legacy hardware was holding it back.

The solution

The company implemented virtualized IBM System x® 3850 X5 and x3650 class servers with intelligent Intel® Xeon® processors running Red Hat Linux and simplified its management processes with IBM Systems Director.

The benefit

Created a compact and efficient virtualized infrastructure that offers fast time-to-market for new services—helping Ping An to extend its service level agreements by 20 percent.

Ping An Insurance Group Company of China, Ltd (Ping An) was established in 1988 in Shekou, Shenzhen. One of the first insurance companies in China to have a shareholding structure, Ping An has since developed into an integrated financial services conglomerate with three core businesses: insurance, banking, and investment. With datacenters in Shanghai, Guannan and Bagualing and offices across China, Ping An serves over 600,000 customers and has an annual turnover equivalent to 43 billion US dollars.

Meeting the challenges of growth

To continue to increase its market share in the competitive Chinese insurance industry, Ping An wanted to improve its customer services. As Liang Xia, IT Engineer at Ping An explains: “To drive business growth in our industry, winning new clients is as important as retaining existing ones. For that reason, we wanted to ensure that there were no barriers to our customers getting insurance quotations from our website, call centers, or approved brokers.”

The company performed a thorough review of the service levels of its applications, and discovered that they were lower than expected. “Our IT systems represent the backbone of the organization—supporting all of our business units and connecting us to our customers across China,” says Liang Xia. As its customer base expanded, its IT infrastructure grew to over 1,000 physical servers.



“The IBM platform has given us the stability and performance boost that we needed to pursue our growth strategy.”

—Liang Xia, IT Engineer, Ping An Insurance
Group Company of China, Ltd.

“Our HP legacy environment was expensive to power and extremely difficult to manage manually,” says Liang Xia. “We became dependent on a reactive maintenance model, which presented a business risk. We wanted a best-practice solution that would reduce the need for manual hardware inspections, cut costs, and increase reliability.”

Choosing the right solution

“We invited a number of vendors to present a total solution comprising both servers and software,” explains Liang Xia. “After evaluating the offerings for functionality and efficiency, we decided that IBM Systems Director software running on a virtualized IBM System x server platform was the optimal choice to meet our requirements of simple resource management with high performance and stability.”

The IBM team consolidated the company’s HP server landscape on a combination of 800 IBM System x3850 X5 and System x3650 class servers with intelligent Intel Xeon processors running the Red Hat Linux operating system.

By virtualizing the compute resources of its IBM System x servers with VMware, Ping An created a private cloud environment—facilitating the rapid deployment of new business services from a centralized pool of processing and storage resources.

“IBM System x was extremely easy to configure,” says Liang Xia. “When the server installation was complete, our physical landscape was reduced by 20 percent. Today, we have over 1,000 virtual servers running Red Hat Linux—including application platforms, Oracle databases, and development environments.”

To further cut the cost and complexity of managing virtual and physical systems, the IBM team installed IBM Systems Director software on its servers. Systems Director helps Ping An to reduce energy costs and usage by monitoring and managing the energy and cooling needs of servers and storage arrays. Using the Standard Edition of the software, the company’s IT team can manage virtual image deployment, monitoring and control features from a user-friendly GUI.

“We were very impressed by the expertise of the IBM team,” says Liang Xia. “Thanks to their careful work, the implementation was completed on time and within budget.”

Solution components

Hardware

- IBM System x® 3850 X5
- IBM System x3650 class servers
- Intel® Xeon® processors

Software

- IBM Systems Director Standard Edition
 - VMware
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Easy system management

Using IBM Systems Director software, Ping An has improved the accuracy of its system fault reporting to almost 85 percent—offering higher visibility of the health of its server landscape, and a significantly lower risk of unplanned downtime. “In the past, it would take one person around 40 minutes each day to look at the status of all of our servers,” says Liang Xia. “By centralizing and automating our monitoring processes with IBM Systems Director software, we can see the health status of all our servers at the touch of a button.

“Today, we only need to spend 10 minutes per day to inspect the landscape—an improvement of 75 percent. This frees our employees to focus on developing new solutions that add more value to the business.”

Exceeding SLAs by 20 percent

Since implementing its consolidated IBM solution, Ping An has achieved its aim of increasing the availability and performance of its customer services. Its environment is easier to manage—reducing business risk, and offering the company a competitive edge in a fast-moving marketplace.

“The IBM platform has given us the stability and performance boost that we needed to pursue our growth strategy,” says Liang Xia.

“By consolidating our distributed environment with VMware on IBM System x servers, we’re now exceeding our business application service level agreements [SLAs] by 20 percent. In addition, the ease of management afforded by IBM Systems Director coupled with the energy-smart design of our System x servers has enabled us to cut maintenance and cooling costs combined by 30 percent a year.”

Looking to the future

Ping An is confident that its IBM solution will help to drive future improvements in maintenance efficiency while keeping system administration costs lean. Following the success of the solution implementation, the company is already planning to extend the functionality of its IBM Systems Director software.

“Currently, we use IBM Systems Director to manage our testing and disaster recovery servers,” says Liang Xia. “By extending the use of IBM Systems Director to our production environment, we will be able to further improve management efficiency, reduce maintenance costs, and gain complete visibility of our server landscape.”

For more information

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For more information about Ping An Insurance visit: pingan.com



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