

hp success story



RadioShack Canada Ltd.



january 2003

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Vice President of IS Margo Weeks, RadioShack Canada Ltd.



## summary:

RadioShack Canada Ltd., Canada's oldest national electronics retailer, currently operates more than 900 stores. The company relies on its partnership with HP, including the strength of its HP ProLiant servers, expert HP Services and innovative software solutions from Microsoft® to keep its online business on track. "HP and Microsoft are leaders in the e-commerce fields. They always treat us like our success is their success."

## RadioShack Canada tunes in to an integrated technology solution

Successful retailers persistently strive to find efficient and cost-effective ways of doing business. RadioShack Canada Ltd. is especially tuned in to e-commerce technology that can leverage the capabilities of its lean and efficient information-technology (IT) department. As Canada's oldest national electronics retailer, the company employs more than 2,300 people in over 900 stores. With only 32 corporate IT professionals, RadioShack Canada must work efficiently to maximize results.

That's why RadioShack Canada's Vice President of IS Margo Weeks insists on implementing technically superior solutions that are easy to install, configure and maintain. "Because we have a small IT team, we must rely on outside expertise," says Weeks. "To achieve long-term success, we choose vendors that care about our business and consistently stay at the top of their respective markets. HP and Microsoft are leaders in the e-commerce field. They always treat us like our success is their success."

### broadcasting a successful website

In business for 30 years, RadioShack Canada is headquartered in Barrie, Ontario. In recent years, the company carefully devised an e-commerce strategy to increase customer satisfaction and boost sales in multiple channels. Customers can shop online and then pick up merchandise at a retail outlet, where sales personnel ensure customers are satisfied with the purchases and eliminate the shipping charges. This strategy creates strong customer relationships while funneling business to the storefronts, eliminating channel conflict and creating both loyal employees and loyal customers.

RadioShack Canada's Internet presence relies on HP ProLiant servers. "We successfully experienced higher levels of customer satisfaction after we implemented our ProLiant-based website," says Weeks. "The site continues to grow in popularity, and benefits us as both a channel for online sales and a tool for customers to research RadioShack products."

HP Services designed and implemented the original RadioShack Canada e-commerce website in 1999. As part of an ongoing relationship, HP Services professionals, at times, serve as a virtual extension of RadioShack's IT staff.

RadioShack Canada must present all content on its website in both English and French, a requirement for Canadian businesses, placing double demands on its e-commerce computing infrastructure. RadioShack meets this challenge with ProLiant servers running Commerce Server 2002 and other Microsoft software.

"Before upgrading to Commerce Server 2002, we had to maintain two separate sites, which amounted to twice the work," explains Weeks. "Due to the multilingual support of Commerce Server 2002, we consolidated our websites to produce a single implementation with dual-language variants. We are now 50 percent more productive, which is invaluable given the small size of our IT team."

Among other things, Commerce Server 2002 allows RadioShack staff to determine related product groupings and possible upgrades, making it easy for sales people and customers to find related items. For example, a remote-control car might require four batteries and a power adapter. "Being able to present products in this fashion saves time, increases revenue and helps us provide meaningful sales units," says Weeks. "Commerce Server 2002 is a great product."

### hp ProLiant servers receive excellent reception

RadioShack Canada populates its data center with more than 60 ProLiant servers. Several ProLiant DL360 servers run Commerce Server 2002 to support front-end e-commerce activities. ProLiant servers host a Microsoft SQL Server 2000 database. An HP NonStop Himalaya server runs custom software applications to handle back-end fulfillment processes.

### business results:

- HP ProLiant servers running Microsoft Commerce Server 2002 allowed IT professionals to consolidate two bilingual websites into one site, increasing productivity by 50 percent and reducing maintenance costs.
- HP ProLiant servers running Microsoft Cluster service software ensure 24x7 uptime with no unplanned outages.
- The solution allows easy and cost-effective management, even with a small support team.
- Customer-centric improvements — with profiling, powerful search capabilities and business analytics — provide better ways to serve customers.
- HP Services spearheaded this complex technology implementation in less than four months and continues to support the multivendor solution, providing faster time to market.
- HP ProLiant-based .NET framework boosted developer productivity by 30 percent.
- The HP-Microsoft partnership ensures new technologies from both companies are fully integrated and well tested.

Other ProLiant servers run the Nortel Symposium Call Center, interfacing with Paradata, an external payment service. All ProLiant servers run the Microsoft Windows® 2000 Advanced Server operating system and Cluster service software to improve availability.

According to Weeks, RadioShack is very happy with the solid performance of ProLiant servers: "Since we started using HP ProLiant DL360 servers for our Commerce Server application, we have experienced no unscheduled downtime. That's an impressive record. This enables us to concentrate resources on activities that give us a competitive edge, such as creating valuable web content, rather than using the time to troubleshoot and fix servers."

Weeks and her staff also rely on HP Insight Manager tools to tell them if server components are on the blink or near the end of their duty cycle. "With the HP Insight Manager solution, it's easy to manage the entire data center from a single terminal and stay on top of naturally occurring failures caused by aging parts," she explains. "Our IT team is also interested in using HP Integrated Lights-Out management capabilities, which provide more effective control of distributed remote sites."

In each of its retail stores, RadioShack uses a variety of ProLiant servers to provide a powerful, cost-effective platform that is easy to install, maintain and repair. Today, customers and employees use these in-store servers to log into the RadioShack website and research RadioShack products. They also use the servers to activate cellular and satellite products and run an e-learning application. This keeps the staff knowledgeable and well informed about current products and technologies, while enriching the customer's shopping experience.

### turning the volume up with SAN performance

RadioShack stores its data in a combined Fibre Channel-based HP StorageWorks Modular Array 8000 and StorageWorks Enterprise Modular Array 12000 system configured as a storage-area network (SAN). Currently, the company backs up its storage environment using a direct-attached StorageWorks TL891DLX DLT tape library. In the future, RadioShack will upgrade to a StorageWorks Enterprise Backup Solution (EBS). The StorageWorks EBS solution can copy data directly

from the SAN, further minimizing the processing requirements of the servers and increasing performance.

RadioShack also purchased StorageWorks Enterprise Volume Manager (EVM) to provide increased availability of production data and reduce user congestion by offloading the LAN and moving the backup load to the SAN. This virtually eliminates the company's backup window — an important feature for a company operating 24x7.

"Our storage systems are growing in capacity to the point where backup can no longer be completed during off hours," says Weeks. "The HP StorageWorks Enterprise Volume Manager eliminates the need for a maintenance window by running backup from a replicated volume, which is independent of application processing."

### no static during ambitious IT program

RadioShack enlisted HP Services to spearhead its extensive technology implementation and provide a single point of contact for ongoing support. Working closely with Microsoft Consulting Services and RadioShack, HP Services provided project management, architecture-design and implementation services, plus knowledge transfer for the upgrade from Commerce Server 3.0 to Commerce Server 2002. HP Services also helped deploy an online payment system and related enterprise software. Now, HP Services is assisting RadioShack Canada in migrating its e-mail platform to Microsoft Exchange 2000 and to implement a new warehouse-management system.

"HP and Microsoft work together to increase the breadth and depth of their solutions," says Weeks. "They understand the business problems facing large retail customers, and their solutions address all aspects of these problems — often delivering hidden benefits in the process. For example, the HP StorageWorks Enterprise Backup Solution increases front-end CPU performance, and Commerce Server 2002 includes a great search engine."

According to Weeks, even with two vendors to juggle, and much new technology to learn, the project concluded rapidly and successfully. "We finished the implementation in less than four months, partly because HP and Microsoft worked

## what makes it work:

### hardware:

- more than 60 HP ProLiant servers populate the corporate data center
- HP ProLiant DL360 servers host the Microsoft Commerce Server 2002 application
- HP ProLiant 7000 servers host a Microsoft SQL Server 2000 database
- HP ProLiant ML350 servers provide in-store support for RadioShack's e-commerce site
- an HP NonStop Himalaya system handles back-end fulfillment operations
- a combination HP StorageWorks Modular Array 8000 (MA8000) and Enterprise Modular Array 12000 (ESA12000) system powers a Fibre Channel SAN with StorageWorks HSG80 array controllers currently using approximately 164GB storage
- HP StorageWorks TL891DLX DLT tape library for backup

### software:

- HP Insight Manager system-management tools
- HP StorageWorks Enterprise Volume Manager (EVM)
- Microsoft BizTalk Server 2000
- Microsoft Commerce Server 2002
- Microsoft Windows 2000 Advance Server operating system
  - Microsoft Cluster service software
- Microsoft .NET Passport
- Microsoft ASP.NET
- Microsoft Visual Studio .NET
- Microsoft Visual Basic .NET
- Microsoft Visual C# .NET
- Nortel Symposium Call Center with Paradata external payment service

### hp services:

- project management
- architecture design
- implementation
- jointly implemented upgrade project in tandem with Microsoft Consulting Services
- ongoing maintenance through Gold MAPS (Microsoft Authorized Premier Support), which is a jointly delivered, enterprise-class support contract
- knowledge transfer

so well with our staff," says Weeks. "We participated in the Commerce Server 2002 early adopter program, making us among the first to implement this technology.

Despite the newness of the solution, both companies were very professional and helped us achieve not only a complete understanding of the new system, but most importantly, a very rapid time to market. Speedy time to market helps keep us ahead of the competition. It was a very good experience."

RadioShack maintains its ProLiant infrastructure and associated Microsoft software through Gold Microsoft Authorized Premier Support (MAPS). This jointly delivered, enterprise-class support offering provides RadioShack Canada access to the dual support resources of HP and Microsoft for all related software issues. This comprehensive service agreement ensures that issues are resolved promptly — with no finger pointing between vendors. "The focus of the Commerce Server 2002 project was to address our complex multinational and multilanguage issues," says Weeks. "Thanks to the great working relationship of these companies, and ongoing support from HP, it turned out to be the perfect solution for us."

### **fine-tuning the Microsoft infrastructure**

No matter which Microsoft products RadioShack adopts, the software is optimized and ensured to run reliably on ProLiant servers due to the close working relationship between Microsoft and HP. In addition to Commerce Server 2002, Weeks deployed other components of the Microsoft .NET Web Services framework. According to Weeks, "Microsoft .NET technology provides the RadioShack IT development team with a solid foundation to build exciting new applications, which provide our company with significant business advantages."

To gain such advantages, the team is already employing an extensive menu of Microsoft tools, including Visual Basic .NET, ASP.NET, Visual C# .NET and BizTalk software. "Our developers are up to 30 percent more productive when they work within the .NET framework," emphasizes Weeks. "Now that they are conversant with the .NET methodology, they don't want to use anything else. We have great success with the HP ProLiant-Microsoft combination."

Weeks touts the high level of integration in the .NET framework. "Integration is always the goal of forward-thinking solution providers," she pronounces. "The Microsoft-HP ProLiant platform is very well integrated. For example, the way .NET components tightly integrate with Visual Studio .NET allows us to leverage our developers by building applications more quickly and productively."

"Commerce Server really allows us to manage the whole site and see it all in a big-picture way," adds Weeks. "Before, we had to manage each feature singly and it was difficult to use it to the best advantage."

As well as upgrading to a more powerful search engine, the website will soon offer RadioShack additional customer-centric features, such as user profiling and business analytics. This will allow RadioShack staff to use analytics to quickly scrutinize very large data sets and to link and analyze complex data over the web. "This is important to us because it will keep us at the forefront of rapidly determining and providing what our customers want. We can package services and products that fulfill customer needs as quickly as they arise. It allows us to be as responsive as a small company, but with the benefits and resources of a large company."

RadioShack Canada prides itself on having a nimble IT department, and the retailer needs technology solutions to perform flawlessly. "We have to keep costs down and efficiency up," concludes Weeks. "HP and Microsoft are dedicated to developing outstanding solutions for their customers. We are immensely more effective with them on our team."

## **contact information**

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## **for more information**

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1/2003

