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Oracle RAC, the Easy Way

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From the get-go, retail software and service provider DataVantage Corp., Cleveland, OH, knew that running Oracle 9i Real Application Clusters (RAC) was the right platform for its new Stored Value gift card and loyalty service.

"Oracle RAC was the best solution I was aware of in terms of OLTP [online transaction processing], speed and reliability," says Ian Amit, stored value project manager. With customers accessing DataVantage's servers 24x7, Amit knew they needed a platform that provided extreme uptime--uptime that "[operating system] clustering wouldn't have given us."

But Amit also knew that without a clustered file system to deliver a shared Oracle home, managing RAC would be a real pain. "Without a clustered file system, we would have had to manage every Oracle instance by itself--init files, config files, logs ... everything from A to Z," Amit says. "Oracle is already complicated enough, so the less we have to worry about, the better."

After evaluating several clustered file system products, DataVantage settled on PolyServe's Matrix Server, which enables the desired shared Oracle home resident on an EMC Clariion array, redundantly connected via a fabric to two two-processor Hewlett-Packard ProLiant DL580 servers. For larger retailers, DataVantage will also sell a turnkey system based on the same basic Oracle RAC/PolyServer combination.

Beyond availability--Amit's primary concern--the Oracle RAC/PolyServe combo gives DataVantage a number of other benefits. For one thing, it cuts down on the total amount of storage capacity they need, as each Oracle instance doesn't need to be replicated.

Matrix Server also makes adding an extra node--or removing it--a breeze. As a service provider to the retail space, "expandability is key," Amit says. New customers will eventually come on board, and holiday shopping always increases retail traffic. When that happens, "I can just add a \$5,000 server and go."

According to Amit, "adding another node into the cluster can happen in under a couple of hours."

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