



APPAREL

■ CLIENT

Columbia Sportswear, a global leader in the manufacture and wholesale of sports apparel and outdoor clothing

■ CHALLENGE

Deploy an efficient and flexible IT infrastructure to support growing business demand for critical SAP ERP projects

■ SOLUTION

Vblock Systems

■ RESULTS

Gained the agility to respond more quickly to business requests, while increasing SAP performance and reducing operational costs

COLUMBIA SPORTSWEAR ENERGIZES BUSINESS AGILITY WITH VBLOCK

BRAND-NAME APPAREL MANUFACTURER IMPROVES PERFORMANCE OF CRITICAL SAP ERP APPLICATIONS WHILE STREAMLINING PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

A leading designer and manufacturer of active outdoor apparel, footwear, accessories and equipment, Columbia Sportswear Company serves a global market with 3,200 employees and offices in 45 countries.

Columbia's aging enterprise resource planning (ERP) infrastructure could no longer keep up with growth of its business, which is expected to nearly triple from \$1.7 billion in revenue to \$5 billion in the coming years. The company's supply chain process was no longer efficient and its infrastructure had become complex and difficult to support.

To meet its long-term growth objectives, Columbia overhauled its ERP environment and consolidated operations on Vblock™ Systems, boosting performance and scalability while improving efficiency and simplifying administration. According to Michael Leeper, senior manager, IT Engineering, "Columbia Sportswear trusts the Vblock systems with running what are the crown jewels of this company. They are up to the task and we are confident that they will support our continued success."

The Challenge

Columbia's legacy Oracle JD Edwards ERP environment ran on RISC-based IBM iSeries servers, which were costly to operate and lacked scalability. The physical infrastructure also required months to deploy new environments, which stalled getting new design ideas into development and production.



“The SAP modules running on Vblock Systems are screaming fast and far exceeded our performance expectations. With our critical SAP applications on the resilient Vblock Systems, backed by VCE’s universal, single-call support, we rest easy knowing that the crown jewels of our IT infrastructure are protected in the best way possible.”
— *Michael Leeper, senior manager, IT Engineering, Columbia Sportswear Company*

In addition, supporting Columbia’s separate storage, networking, and compute environments was tedious, often requiring many hours negotiating among various vendors before a problem could be resolved.

The Solution

After evaluating the risk versus return of transition, Columbia decided on a converged infrastructure deployment model leveraging Vblock systems from VCE for its new SAP Business All-in-One for Consumer Products ERP, specialized for apparel and footwear companies. Key factors in the decision included the advantages of a preconfigured design, flexibility, ease of management and single point of contact of the Vblock systems compared to a build your own or reference architecture approach from IBM and NetApp.

Columbia relies on its 100 percent virtualized Vblock systems to run the full suite of SAP Business All-in-One for Consumer Products modules. These control and monitor its entire supply chain, from procuring raw materials and managing cross-plant production to delivering finished styles and streamlining order processing. Columbia also leverages the Vblock systems for SAP Business Warehouse, Supplier Resource Management and Business Planning Consolidation, as well as its development and load testing environments.

In addition to its production Vblock Series 700 in Denver, Colorado, Columbia Sportswear Company has a second Vblock system used for test and development, as well as disaster recovery, 1,200 miles away in Portland, Oregon. As part of the Vblock system environment, Columbia uses EMC RecoverPoint remote data protection to replicate between the two sites, and EMC Data Domain deduplication storage systems for backup. Columbia is eagerly awaiting support from VCE for running active/active data centers between Portland and Denver, leveraging EMC vPLEX technologies.

Columbia highly values VCE’s universal, single-call support. Not only does Columbia IT no longer need to play “traffic cop” among different vendors, but they work seamlessly with VCE’s support professionals so valuable time is focused on addressing the issue right from the outset.

The Results

With Vblock systems, Columbia Sportswear gained agility, resilience and efficiency for running SAP, the most important set of applications in the company. The many benefits resulting from this solution include:

- System scalability enabled IT to support many more SAP environments than originally planned in the rollout
- Columbia was able to revamp existing processes dramatically altering how the way work is done and enabling the business to operate faster
- Rapid deployment and ease of use enabled Columbia to redirect IT staff to find new ways to solve business problems and bring value to the company
- The Vblock system cut provisioning times for DevOps from 6 weeks to 2 hours resulting in accelerated new business initiatives, such as product designs and production plans

With the agility of Vblock systems and intelligence provided by VCE management tools, Columbia Sportswear is transforming IT to be much more service oriented in fulfilling business requests. Instead of asking business users to estimate their resource requirements, Columbia IT now relies on its Vblock systems to deliver resources as needed. It’s allowing IT to “never say no” with an infrastructure that can handle nearly any project that comes through the door.



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