



CONSTRUCTION

■ CLIENT

Lafarge, multi-national building materials company

■ CHALLENGE

Implement a data center strategy that enables Lafarge to effectively respond to changing market conditions and demands

■ SOLUTION

Vblock Systems running Oracle's JD Edwards suite of enterprise resource planning (ERP) software

■ RESULTS

Is dramatically reducing space requirements and power costs while providing improved business agility

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VBLOCK AT THE HEART OF VIRTUALIZED JD EDWARDS ROLLOUT AT LAFARGE AMERICAS

ADAPTING TO BUSINESS FLUCTUATIONS WITH A LOWER-COST DATA CENTER STRATEGY

Because the building materials industry is especially sensitive to both global and local economic conditions, the ability to adjust cost in response to regional opportunity offers a competitive advantage. However, traditional data center models—overburdened with fixed costs—have not supported needed levels of business agility.

Lafarge, a global leader in building materials, devised an IT initiative to change that. To build a more agile cost structure, Lafarge required a new architecture—one that would enable it to spin down data center output and expenses during economic slowdowns and allocate IT resources to the fastest-growing markets and segments.

With the Americas as the launching pad for its innovative data center strategy, Lafarge has developed a new ERP template—built on Oracle's JD Edwards EnterpriseOne—and migrated it to a virtual environment running on Vblock™ Systems.



“Our analysis points to a 72.5% reduction in data center floor space and a 54.8% reduction in power consumption for the Lafarge IT environment in the Americas. That savings will allow us to implement our ‘metro-cluster’ data center strategy while remaining cost neutral in our IT operating budget.”

— Brent Wolfram Director, Technology and Security Architecture Lafarge Americas

The Challenge

Headquartered in Paris, France, Lafarge has approximately 68,000 employees in more than 60 countries generating annual sales of 15.2 billion euros. For many years, the company sought an efficient way to adjust the capacity of traditional “big-iron” data centers to match business requirements.

Lafarge’s experience with virtualization demonstrated the gains they could achieve. However, in order to move the ERP system—the heart of the business—to a virtual environment, the company needed a reliable infrastructure from a vendor it could trust. In Vblock Systems, Lafarge found the levels of availability and flexibility it requires.

The Solution

One of the largest multi-national users of Oracle’s JD Edwards EnterpriseOne solution, Lafarge has taken the lead in optimizing the software to run in a virtualized environment on Vblock Systems. In addition, the company relies on its Vblock system to run IBM Cognos for business intelligence.

Lafarge is rolling out its innovative data center strategy first in the Americas region, which accounts for 27% of its global sales. The Vblock Systems strategy enables the company to nimbly respond to changes in business conditions while making the most of regional IT resources.

The new approach also abandons the traditional, warm-site, disaster recovery (DR) model in favor of a “metro-cluster” strategy that allows the company to use its DR resources for development, quality assurance, and other needs. The company will federate its original data center with a second center planned in close proximity to the first—operating the Vblock Systems as a high-availability pair rather than as a production system and active standby. This will improve resource utilization and allow IT to migrate workloads “on the fly” between data centers.

The Results

Lafarge Americas’ move away from HP’s legacy Itanium-based hardware to Vblock Systems is producing a number of benefits for the region:

- Data center floor space will be reduced by a projected 72.5% when the rollout is complete.
- Power consumption will decline by a projected 54.8%.
- Lafarge’s metro-cluster data center strategy will be implemented with no increase in the Americas’ IT operating budget.
- The region’s data center capacity can be quickly and efficiently adjusted as needed, while making better use of deployed capacity through higher consolidation ratios.
- Performance of Oracle’s JD Edwards solution and other applications has been improved by leveraging specific compute, network, storage, and virtualization technologies that are integrated into Vblock Systems.
- IT planning can be done much further in advance now that the region deals with only one vendor as opposed to juggling the roadmaps for five or six vendors as in the past.

“This is the first step in an ongoing process, and it’s going to be a while before we have converted all operations and can realize the full ROI,” said Brent Wolfram, Director, Technology and Security Architecture for Lafarge Americas. “But we’re already much more nimble and agile, and our IT costs are going to continue to come down.”



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