Having a great idea for a product or service is a start. Performing market research, finding the perfect office space, hiring the right people and ordering company stationary are all steps in the right direction. However, with every new business there are many complex things to address. For example, understanding federal and state compliance regulations, the provision of health, dental and disability insurance, 401(k) plans, and a host of employee related topics.

In reality, running a company can be considerably more complicated than most people think. And if you’re one of the estimated 8.5 million business owners in this country, chances are you didn’t go into business to handle employee-related matters, payroll or risk management issues. Fortunately, Gevity HR did.

When Gevity HR, a leading human resources (HR) outsourcing organization delivering a range of services from finding, developing, and retaining the right people to managing the paperwork and protecting the business, needed a scalable, high-availability e-business solution, it turned to a trusted partner, Hewlett-Packard Company for proven answers.

**helping businesses from coast to coast**

Gevity HR, headquartered in Bradenton, Florida, is one of the largest HR outsourcing providers in the United States, with over 40 branch offices located across the country. Key locations include Atlanta, Dallas, New York and San Francisco. Clients include small-to-medium-sized companies with 10 through 1000+ employees.

Since 1984, Gevity HR has provided its clients with a broad range of outsourcing services, including payroll administration, risk management, benefits administration, unemployment administration and human resource consulting. In 2001, with almost 8,000 small business clients, ranging from financial institutions to architectural firms, Gevity HR processed approximately 5 million payroll checks, handled more than 2 million phone calls and processed over 2.5 million e-mail and fax transactions.

**taking advantage of online opportunities**

In its first 15 years of operation, Gevity HR was a traditional bricks-and-mortar company – processing payroll checks via overnight delivery, and conducting business via phone and fax. “A few years ago we believed it was important that we provide self-service, Internet-based capabilities for our small and medium sized business owners. Administration activities in a small business are often handled outside of normal office hours and we felt they needed a way to get access to their HR information,” observed Lisa Harris,
Gevity HR’s Senior Vice President and Chief Information Officer.

In 1999, Gevity HR implemented its Internet-based HR and payroll self-service application. “Today, we have over 90 percent of our new clients interacting with us, in some way, via the web. We have achieved a higher client retention rate and a higher satisfaction ranking from our e-business-based customers,” noted Harris. “Our online customers are really enjoying the ease-of-use and convenience of the Internet via our HR portal: GevityHRCentral.”

The HR portal is based on Oracle Portal and 9iAS web server software running on a combination of HP rp2470 and rp7400 servers and takes Gevity HR’s client offering to the next level. “The HR portal allows our clients to access HR information about best practices: how often job description should be revamped, the optimal frequency of salary searches, best practices around employee training, etc.” explained Harris.

Searching for scalable solutions

Harris credits HP with being the backbone that allowed Gevity HR to grow at such an incredible rate. However, in 1998, when Gevity HR was first considering an e-business solution, it looked at a number of other providers. “We were an HP shop at the time, but because we were going to invest a significant amount of money to upgrade our technology, we wanted to review where we were and decide if HP was still the platform we wanted,” said Michael Clifford, Gevity HR’s Director of IT. “We talked to several large vendors. Not only were we looking for a platform that could run our company today, but also we had to know that there would be additional hardware, additional capability coming down the road. HP showed us that they had that roadmap and that scalability.”

“HP provided us with the appropriate technology to support our environment. Even better, it’s highly scalable to meet our growth. We started at the lower end of the HP-UX server range and now we’re at the high-end with the HP 9000 V2500 running HP-UX 11i. And when the time came, HP was instrumental in fine-tuning our environment as we

Industry

HR Outsourcing

Challenges

- increase competitive lead as an e-business company
- maintain a scalable, highly available, high-performance e-business solution

Solution

- long-time vendor HP chosen as strategic partner for hardware and connectivity infrastructure
- Oracle selected as strategic partner for applications

Results

- In 2001, over 5 million payroll checks were processed, more than 2 million payroll calls were handled and over 2.5 million e-mail and fax transactions were responded to
- 60 percent of total clients utilize Gevity HR’s e-business services and 90 percent of new clients are utilizing some aspect of the Internet services
- Scalable HP/Oracle solution allows Gevity HR to cost-effectively expand as needed in the future
- HP/Oracle’s support of Gevity HR helps give it a competitive market advantage with a highly available, always-on e-business
updated to Oracle E-Business Suite 11i. We can continue to grow with HP-UX servers as our chosen platform because HP has the Superdome servers available."

Harris continued, “HP Consulting and Oracle provided an integrated end-to-end solution during the initial implementation and as part of the upgrade to Oracle E-Business Suite 11i. Our two strategic partners supply everything from hardware to software, to integrated services enabling us to implement new capabilities quickly, cheaply and reliably, helping to keep us ahead of our competition.”

supporting an always-on IT infrastructure
Gevity HR relies on HP’s Performance Monitoring Tool Suite and HP OpenView with Network Node Manager, IT Operations, PerfView, GlancePlus and MeasureWare modules for complete systems monitoring capability. “Oracle and HP are already integrated and the Oracle applications are specifically tuned to HP-UX 11i,” explained Harris. “We’ve been able to process over 100,000 payroll checks in two days during the Thanksgiving holidays! Without HP and Oracle working side by side on improving performance, we would never have been able to achieve that.”

High availability is a ‘must-have’ for Gevity HR. Harris commented, “We already have redundant servers. If we hit a peak, if we have increased traffic, we know that we can very quickly go to our backup servers. One of the most important things is we can NEVER be down. If our applications are down, we can’t deliver payroll and therefore we have no business and no customers! HP and Oracle together provide a solution that prevents us from having those kinds of troubles. HP MC/Serviceguard and Oracle’s Internet computing architecture allows us to automatically drop to another HP high-availability server. We need that security.”

As an added layer of protection, Gevity HR has a mix of HP Personalized System Support (PSS) and Critical System Support (CSS) across all its servers providing both proactive and reactive support services including the deployment of the High Availability Observatory (HAO) monitoring software. “The fact that HP and Oracle have a strong relationship means that when we do have a problem, and we’re not quite sure if it’s a hardware problem or a software problem, both companies work together and as a result we get really good customer service response,” said Harris.

In addition to running HAO, Gevity HR is one of the first customers to be running HP’s next-generation remote systems monitoring and diagnostic solution called HP Instant Support Enterprise Edition (ISEE). The company has deployed it to monitor the 14 HP-UX servers at one time. “It’s a perfect fit for us because it’s designed for servers that are in production 7x24,” explained Janet Fichter, UNIX Administrator for Gevity HR. Anytime a hardware event is detected by ISEE the event report is routed to a hub server, which HP is constantly monitoring. Upon receipt of an event report, HP can immediately run diagnostic tools to help resolve the problem.

“We’ve already had some good experiences where ISEE detected a possible problem. In one case, a failed primary root disk was detected and I was notified by HP engineers immediately,” noted Fichter. “We were able to resolve the issue in a very short timeframe and in a controlled manner. While the detection of a problem doesn’t always avoid system downtime, it does give us the flexibility to plan the downtime and avoid catastrophic unplanned downtime. We have an uptime goal of 99.999% and ISEE helps to minimize unplanned downtime and related impacts to our business.”

scalable, manageable storage
Along with servers, a vital part of Gevity HR’s HP/Oracle solution is scalable disk storage. In 1999, the company went from

solution highlights
- 2 hp 9000 V2500 Enterprise Servers running production Oracle ERP and CRM application modules and databases
- 2 hp rp7400 servers running production Oracle Portal and Internet payroll application databases
- 2 hp rp7400 servers running development and QA environments for Oracle ERP, CRM, Portal, and Internet payroll applications and databases
- 6 hp rp2470 servers running production Oracle 9iAS web server and Portal applications, as well as Oracle ERP and CRM application servers
- 2 hp rp5400 server acting as the management console hp OpenView IT Operations and the Veritas backup management server
- 1 hp 9000 K-Class server as a “sandbox” environment with Oracle application modules and databases
- 2 hp Surestore Disk Array xp512 6 TB
- 16 port Brocade switches for storage area networking
- Nokia/Checkpoint Firewalls
- Nortel Networking
- Oracle e-business suite (Financials, HR, Payroll, CRM and Portal)
- Oracle version 8i, 64-bit database
- hp OpenView; Network Node Manager, IT Operations, PerfView, GlancePlus and MeasureWare
- hp SAN Management Software Suite
- hp Personalized System Support and Critical Systems Support
- hp Instant Support Enterprise Edition (ISEE)
- hp Consulting for implementation services
- 1,000+ hp Vectra PCs
- hp Netserver NT/2000/XP server farm running mission critical Microsoft Windows® NT/2000/XP applications including Microsoft Exchange Server, Microsoft Proxy Server, Microsoft IIS, Veritas Backup Console, hp XP and SAN Management Consoles, and CheckPoint Reporting Modules and Intrusion Detection software
- SunGard disaster recovery support services
an EMC 3700 disk array to the high performing HP Surestore Disk Array xp256 to meet its growth rate of 6GB per week. “Beyond performance, an important decision point was the xp256’s manageability,” said Clifford. “HP provides tools and software applications that allow us to manage our environment in-house. That was a big plus for us.” Harris added, “By 2000 we’d been growing so fast that we added an xp256 and during the same year we replaced the xp256 with the xp512 in a storage area network (SAN). In 2001 we added another xp512, giving us plenty of capacity for further growth.”

HP: a true e-business partner

Thanks to its HP/Oracle solution, Gevity HR was able to substantially change the way it does business. “We have asked a lot from our partners in terms of stability, capability and performance,” said Harris. “HP is our strategic vendor from a hardware/connectivity/infrastructure perspective. Oracle is our strategic partner for applications. Both companies have been very aggressive and supportive of our e-business initiatives. As we continue to evolve our e-business activities, our partnership with HP and Oracle continues to give us competitive advantage.”

For more information on how working with Hewlett-Packard can benefit you, contact your local HP service representative, or visit us through the Internet at our World Wide Web address: http://www.hp.com/go/oracle

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Lisa Harris
Senior Vice President
Chief Information Officer
Gevity HR

Gevity HR was honored by the ComputerWorld Smithsonian awards for e-business capabilities and in September 2001, Information Week named it #25 in the top innovators awards for its CRM and e-business initiatives, including the HR portal. Gevity HR has also been the only customer to win the HP Bravo Award for the last three consecutive years.