

Help | Contact Us

DATAMONITOR COMPUTERWIRE

[Home](#) [Industries](#) [Companies](#) [Services](#) [My Homepage](#) [My Account](#)

SEARCH OUR PRODUCTS USING [Advanced Search](#)

You are here: [Home](#) > [Industries](#) > News Overview

Euro Travel Firm Picks Netezza Appliance For Analysis

News Publication Date: 21 December 2007

By Madan Sheina

Appliance vendor Netezza beat off competition from Microsoft and Hewlett-Packard to provide the North European operations of UK-based travel services firm Thomas Cook Group with a data warehousing platform.

Swedish BI services firm BizIntel worked closely with the Thomas Cook division and Netezza to implement the Netezza Performance Server (NPS) appliance which will provide bedrock for warehousing and analyzing customer and other business data from Thomas Cook's Danish, Finnish, Norwegian and Swedish businesses, whose IT systems are centrally managed.

The NPS appliance uproots a legacy data warehousing platform built on Hewlett-Packard's Tandem Non-Stop database system that was starting to crack under increasing data volumes and shrinking processing windows.

That's where the strengths of Netezza's integrated hardware-software appliance comes into play, since it's pre-designed for high-performance, terabyte-class analytics. Architecturally the appliance integrates a relational database, server and storage into a single compact and power-efficient unit. NPS' patented streaming architecture, which places processing power next to the data, offers 10-100 times the performance of traditional systems, so the company claims.

Thommy Jakobsson, IT infrastructure manager for Thomas Cook's North European operations said the company had been a Tandem/HP Non-Stop customer since 1969.

"We initially used it to run our travel booking system...but later also developed a data warehousing platform on top of it as well."

According to Jakobsson the system had been struggling to perform under rapidly growing data volumes for some time, prompting the company to look for a replacement.

"There were conflicts, in terms of data loading and speed of analysis, with running the data warehouse alongside an online booking system that was stretched across a 24x7 business operation. It soon became apparent that the Non-Stop data warehouse was not enough and was also starting to impact the performance of our online booking systems as well."

Thomas Cook worked with BizIntel to test three systems, Netezza's NPS, Microsoft's SQL Server database/BI platform and HP's newly released NeoView platform, and brought all these technologies in house for testing in March this year.

"We looked to bring each system in-house because we didn't want to transport our data outside of the company and ran the same quite

Welcome

If you have an account

Alternatively...

This article is...

part of the following services:

[Computergram - 21 December 2007](#)

and in the following industry sectors:

[Issues in Technology and Services > Users > Case Studies](#)

[Issues in Technology and Services > Users > Technology or Services Selection](#)

[Software > Information Management > Business Intelligence](#)

[Software > Information Management > Data Management](#)

[Software > Information Management > Databases](#)

Companies Mentioned

[Hewlett-Packard Company](#) (5)

[Karstadt Quelle AG](#) (1)

[Microsoft Corporation](#) (6)

[MicroStrategy Incorporated](#) (3)

[MyTravel plc](#) (1)

[Thomas Cook AG](#) (12)

This list is automatically generated and occasionally companies may appear that have similar names to those mentioned.



<http://www.computerwire.com/industries/research/?pid=818E7D97%2DD4E7%2D4BA1%2DB4F8%2D0378172D8B24>

complex queries against our live data."

After about a month of rigorous testing, Jakobsson found that HP's NeoView didn't interface particularly well with the analysis front-end that Thomas Cook was using from MicroStrategy.

"The drivers didn't match so we stopped testing that platform," he said.

While the Microsoft system coped better the deal-clincher, according to Jakobsson, was NPS' out-of-the box configurability and speed of deployment, which are also key tenets of the appliance approach.

"The main thing with Netezza is that we didn't have to do much, if any work, to make it work with MicroStrategy's analysis and reporting tools. We also found it easy to load data into it."

"Although we're a Microsoft shop, we found that with SQL Server that you had to do a lot of lot of custom changes to the system in order to make it work well in our environment."

He added: "If we had the time to do those changes, it would have worked just as well as Netezza. But we didn't have that time. Plus we would probably have had to swap out our existing MicroStrategy analysis tools with Microsoft's to get the most benefit out the SQL Server platform."

Jakobsson didn't say how much the NPS system cost the company. But from a pure software standpoint he acknowledged that Microsoft was the cheapest option by far.

"Even though we evaluated the [more expensive] Enterprise Edition of SQL Server, the database platform would still have been cheaper than Netezza, and certainly cheaper than HP."

"But if you counted in the time and effort required to change analyze system and platform and that would have added substantial costs to the deployment."

Jakobsson also said that NPS coped admirably with the complex queries that Thomas Cook fired at it. These included: financial queries that joined a profit and cost table containing up to 500 million rows of data with lookup tables to produce temporary tables, which in turn are joined to show the result; statistical queries on 800 million row tables with historical hotel occupancy, which is scanned using primary keys rather than full-table scan; and customer segmentation queries where two tables of 3 million rows are joined.

"With NPS the results of the financial queries were returned within 30 seconds while the statistical and customer segmentation queries took around 10 seconds," Jakobsson said.

Jakobsson expects NPS to become the "backbone" of Thomas Cook's entire North European operation and will allow the company to analyze customer data across all its channels to market, including the Web.

"We now take over 50% of our bookings online which means more data to store and analyze."

But Jakobsson added that NPS system is not yet in full production today.



<http://www.computerwire.com/industries/research/?pid=818E7D97%2DD4E7%2D4BA1%2DB4F8%2D0378172D8B24>

"We only use it for customer segmentation right now, but we hope to migrate fully off the Non Stop platform to NPS by next March."
Thomas Cook has no plans in place at this time to adopt NPS across its other European business units – central Europe and the UK – and its US operations.

"It's fair to say that each regional Thomas Cook business unit runs its own It independently and so far other regions outside of North Europe don' plan to follow suit."

In addition to travel services, Thomas Cook Group also operates a fleet of almost 100 aircraft (through Thomas Cook Airlines) and maintains a network of more than 3,000 owned or franchised travel offices. It operates under the Airtours, Direct Holidays, Going Places, Manos, Panorama, Sunset and Thomas Cook brands. In June 2007, Thomas Cook acquired fellow European travel services provider MyTravel Group in a deal worth around \$5.5bn.

Holding company Arcandor, which operates German retail chain Karstadt Quelle, owns 52% of Thomas Cook Group.

[About Datamonitor](#) | [Investor Relations](#) | [Careers](#) | [Help](#) | [Contact Us](#)