



### Overview

**Country or Region:** United States

**Industry:** Professional services

### Customer Profile

UrbanTrans Consultants provides transportation consulting services to North American municipalities and developers. The company has 20 employees and is headquartered in Denver, Colorado.

### Business Situation

The company's unreliable, Linux-based e-mail server computers cost UrbanTrans U.S.\$1,650 a month in maintenance and thousands of dollars more in lost worker productivity.

### Solution

UrbanTrans replaced its Linux and open-source e-mail and document-sharing software with Windows® Small Business Server 2003 R2; in the process, it reduced its server count from five to three.

### Benefits

- Monthly maintenance savings of \$1,650
- Monthly billing increase of \$4,600
- Increased employee and client satisfaction
- Spam-resistant messaging environment

## Consultancy Discards Linux, Saves \$1,650 in Monthly Fixes, Ups Billings by \$4,600

“We haven't had an e-mail outage in six months since installing Windows Small Business Server 2003. That extra reliability translates into \$4,600 of billable time each month.”

Matthew Kaufman, Senior Planner, UrbanTrans Consultants

UrbanTrans Consultants is a 20-person consultancy based in Denver, Colorado, that designs transportation solutions for municipalities and developers in the United States and abroad. When the company's Linux-based server computers began to suffer weekly downtime at a cost of U.S.\$6,250 per month, the company worked with The Uptime Group, a Microsoft® Certified Partner, to find a new solution. UrbanTrans replaced the Red Hat Linux 2.0 operating system and its open-source e-mail, file server, and document management software with Windows® Small Business Server 2003 R2. The switch eliminated server downtime, and the company is saving \$1,650 in monthly maintenance costs and boosting monthly billings by \$4,600. Employees and clients are less frustrated and more productive, and UrbanTrans has been able to use its technology more strategically to roll out new solutions.

“... I was spending about 20 percent of my time on computer problems ... All in all, the Linux servers were costing us about \$6,250 a month in downtime-related problems.”

Matthew Kaufman, Senior Planner,  
UrbanTrans Consultants

## Situation

UrbanTrans Consultants is a transportation consulting firm that works with government entities and private developers to create innovative transportation solutions, such as downtown parking plans, marketing plans, and carpool and vanpool programs. The company provides transportation planning services, demand management programs, stakeholder outreach, creative development, and marketing services. UrbanTrans has offices in Denver, Colorado; Washington, D.C.; Atlanta, Georgia; Houston, Texas; and Dubai, United Arab Emirates. The company has 20 employees among its five offices.

Four years ago, UrbanTrans installed five Linux-based server computers for e-mail message management, fax, file and print, Web serving, and collaboration. It ran Red Hat Linux operating system version 2.0 and an assortment of open-source software: the qmail message transfer agent, the SquirrelMail Web mail program, the VPOP e-mail domain program, and KnowledgeTree document management software. The firm ran the Windows® XP operating system and Microsoft® Office programs on its desktop computers.

Over time, various well-meaning employees tinkered with the server computers and reliability began to suffer as a result, to the point where UrbanTrans experienced weekly downtime. The frequent loss of e-mail messaging—critical to employees’ ability to communicate with clients and with one another and to complete time-sensitive assignments—damaged UrbanTrans’s business.

“Clients were complaining, and employees were frustrated at their inability to communicate reliably over e-mail, in the office or from home,” says Matthew Kaufman, a Senior Planner and resident computer expert at UrbanTrans. “We

encourage teleworking as part of our transportation planning advice to clients, but it was difficult for our own employees because of the Linux systems’ unreliability.”

The downtime resulted in a significant amount of lost worker productivity and maintenance costs. “Every employee lost at least an hour a week of productivity because of downtime, and we were spending U.S.\$1,000 a month in outside consultant fees to fix problems,” Kaufman says. “Plus, I was spending about 20 percent of my time on computer problems, rather than doing my job as a planner. All in all, the Linux servers were costing us about \$6,250 a month in downtime-related problems.”

Also, the open-source document management software that UrbanTrans used to share documents had problems with document checkout. If one person didn’t check in a document correctly, the document was unavailable to others, and this caused workflow problems and project delays.

The breaking point came when vulnerability in the Linux-based qmail application allowed the company’s server computers to be targeted as spam agents, which blocked the servers and further impeded UrbanTrans’s ability to communicate by e-mail messaging. “We couldn’t send e-mail messages to certain clients at all, because our e-mail messages were being blocked by their spam filters,” Kaufman says.

## Solution

The outside technology consultant that helped UrbanTrans with its Linux woes was The Uptime Group of Lakewood, Colorado. The Uptime Group originally provided only Linux and open-source solutions, in an effort to provide cost-effective solutions for small-business customers. However, says Patty Laushman, President of The Uptime Group, “We were watching Windows Small Business

## “Moving to Windows Small Business Server 2003 got us out of reactionary mode and allowed us to be more proactive in our use of technology.”

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Server very carefully, and it was compelling. Our customers started asking for shared contacts and calendars, which weren't available in the Linux world. In fact, none of the open-source options came close to Windows Small Business Server 2003. When Red Hat upped its maintenance fees for its Linux and small-business server products, there was no longer even a price differential between the Linux offerings and the Microsoft program.”

In 2003, The Uptime Group became a Microsoft Certified Partner and began to augment its Linux offerings with Microsoft software. “At the time, about 80 percent of our revenues were Linux-related and 20 percent were from Microsoft—mostly for desktop software,” Laushman says. “Within 18 months, that ratio had flipped, mostly on the strength of Windows Small Business Server 2003.”

The Uptime Group installed Windows Small Business Server 2003 R2 Standard Edition at UrbanTrans, performed the switchover in two days, and incurred less than two hours of downtime. In the process, UrbanTrans was able to retire two of its five server computers: the file server and the KnowledgeTree servers. “We're really trying to reduce our electricity use as we try to minimize our company's carbon footprint, and it's a benefit to be able to streamline our server count,” Kaufman says.

Windows Small Business Server 2003 R2 consists of the Windows Server® 2003 operating system and a suite of popular Microsoft business programs, packaged and priced for small businesses. The Standard Edition includes Windows SharePoint® Services (part of Windows Server 2003), Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 communication and collaboration server software, the Microsoft Office Outlook® 2003

messaging and collaboration client, and Microsoft Shared Fax Service.

“We liked the extra features in Windows Small Business Server 2003, such as Windows SharePoint Services, which we wanted to use to replace KnowledgeTree for document sharing and collaboration,” Kaufman says. “We also liked the Remote Desktop feature, which allows employees to more easily work from home.”

### Benefits

Since UrbanTrans replaced three unreliable Linux-based e-mail, file and print, and collaboration server computers with a single server running Windows Small Business Server 2003 R2, it has eliminated significant monthly maintenance costs and boosted monthly billings by recovering staff hours previously idled by server downtime. Employees and clients are happier, the company's vital e-mail server is more secure, and Kaufman has finally been able to move beyond constant repairs to think strategically about the use of technology to forward the business.

### More Strategic Use of Technology

“By moving to Windows Small Business Server 2003, UrbanTrans has been able to move out of reactive mode and into proactive mode,” Laushman says. “We recently had a meeting with UrbanTrans staffers about their goals for the next year, which is the first time that we've done that. Before, we were so busy fixing things that we had no time to think about strategic issues.”

Echoes Kaufman, “Moving to Windows Small Business Server 2003 got us out of reactionary mode and allowed us to be more proactive in our use of technology. We can pay The Uptime Group to add new capabilities rather than just repair things.”

“There are so many more resources on the Web for Microsoft products than for open source.... It’s much easier for us to troubleshoot problems in a Microsoft-based environment.”

Patty Laushman, President, The Uptime Group

UrbanTrans has undertaken the creation of document-sharing sites, using Windows SharePoint Services. Such sites allow UrbanTrans team members to work together more easily. “We have teams spread out across the country, and the use of SharePoint sites will help us integrate our offices by doing more document sharing and collaboration,” Kaufman says. The combination of collaboration sites and reliable e-mail messaging will also allow UrbanTrans to meet its goal to offer viable teleworking options to every employee.

Adds Kaufman, “Version control in Windows SharePoint Services is much easier than in KnowledgeTree and allows us to make document changes in a more timely manner. We won’t have to send large documents back and forth through e-mail.” Also, UrbanTrans can adapt Windows SharePoint Services to its workflow, whereas before the company had to change its workflow to match the limitations of KnowledgeTree.

#### **Monthly Maintenance Savings of \$1,650**

With the move to Windows Small Business Server 2003, UrbanTrans has eliminated \$1,650 in monthly maintenance fees associated with the Linux server computers. “We’re no longer paying The Uptime Group \$1,000 a month to fix things, and I’m able to redirect about \$650 of my time each month to billable activities, rather than to computer issues,” Kaufman says.

#### **Monthly Billing Increase of \$4,600**

The savings multiply when productivity gains from increased server uptime are factored in. UrbanTrans’s e-mail system is much more reliable now, which returns at least an hour of productive time to each employee each week. “We haven’t had an e-mail outage in six months since installing Windows Small Business Server 2003,” Kaufman says. “That extra reliability translates into \$4,600 of billable time each month. That’s huge for a

firm of our size.” Kaufman estimates that the company realized a two-month return on its investment in Windows Small Business Server 2003.

#### **Increased Employee and Client Satisfaction**

With more reliable e-mail messaging, UrbanTrans is able to communicate with clients without interruption and better meet project deadlines. “We used to have a lot of frustrated employees when e-mail would go down, and that’s gone away,” Kaufman says. “I don’t have them calling me up anymore about outages. I’m able to spend more time working with clients and being proactive in our use of technology.”

UrbanTrans employees also like the consistent e-mail interface across desktop and Web versions of Office Outlook 2003 and the shared contacts and calendars. “Employees love Outlook Web Access, because it provides a Web-based e-mail interface that is identical to their desktop e-mail interface,” Kaufman says. “This was not the case with SquirrelMail Web mail, which had a completely different interface than Outlook. Routine tasks such as setting up e-mail accounts are much easier in Outlook than in the Linux environment.”

#### **Spam-Resistant Messaging Environment**

The enterprise-caliber reliability features designed into Exchange Server 2003 give UrbanTrans a rock-solid messaging foundation, with regular improvements by Microsoft. “In addition to receiving continuous security updates from Microsoft, there are so many more resources on the Web for Microsoft products than for open source,” Laushman says. “Someone else has already seen and solved every problem. We struggled to find fixes for problems that we encountered with Red Hat Linux. It’s much easier for us to troubleshoot problems in a Microsoft-based environment.”

## For More Information

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For more information about The Uptime Group products and services, call (303) 757-4611 or visit the Web site at: [www.theuptimegroup.com](http://www.theuptimegroup.com)

For more information about UrbanTrans Consultants products and services, call (720) 570-3343 or visit the Web site at: [www.urbantrans.com](http://www.urbantrans.com)

## Windows Server 2003 R2

The Windows Server 2003 R2 family helps organizations do more with less. Now you can run your IT infrastructure more efficiently, build better applications faster, and deliver the best infrastructure for enhancing user productivity. And you can do all this faster, more securely, and at lower cost.

For more information about Windows Server 2003 R2, please visit:

[www.microsoft.com/windowsserver2003](http://www.microsoft.com/windowsserver2003)

### Software and Services

- Microsoft Server Product Portfolio
  - Windows Small Business Server 2003 R2 Standard Edition

### Hardware

- Dell PowerEdge server computers

### Partners

- The Uptime Group