

DIS-CHEM

National South African pharmaceutical group relies on Stratus to ensure dispensary and POS solutions are **ALWAYS ON**

Established in 1978, Dis-Chem started out as a small pharmacy in Mondeor, South of Johannesburg. Today, with close to 100 stores across the country, the Dis-Chem Group is still privately owned and run by the original founders.

Over the years the Dis-Chem Group had actively sought to replicate the same model across all their stores, with each store's IT infrastructure providing payment and loyalty point functionality, as well as administrative applications, inventory management, script verification and storage.

Dis-Chem attempted to build a cluster solution for availability with the individual servers and software applications in each store designed to support the necessary store functionality. However, this infrastructure was by no means ideal because if one of the servers failed, it could potentially bring down the entire store.

The Challenge

With a large, rapidly growing, national footprint of close to 100 stores, the continual downtime issues presented Dis-Chem with a real challenge.

This was particularly the case in remote locations where fixing a failure or outage would typically involve a technician booking a flight, taking the parts with them, conducting the repair and then getting the systems back online. With this approach even basic IT problems could take hours, or even longer to fix. In some cases, this resulted in the store needing to trade manually or not being able to trade at all. This understandably led to customer dissatisfaction, revenue loss and damage to the Dis-Chem brand.

In addition to the downtime issues, Dis-Chem was also experiencing compatibility challenges when it came to replacing the technology. For example, when a new server was installed to replace an old one, it was not always compatible with the existing software and infrastructure.



“The Stratus brand is associated with the highest levels of availability. That’s why we felt comfortable they would be able to do the job.”

Kim Sim
Group IT & Projects Executive
Dis-Chem

The Solution

Together with partner First Technology Group, Stratus Technologies saw an opportunity to assist Dis-Chem in addressing their intermittent downtime issues at various stores across the country.



For an **Always-On** World

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Stratus provided Dis-Chem with a much simpler solution than their previous cluster solution in the form of Stratus® ftServer® platforms. This effectively solved all of the availability issues, as well as eliminating the management, supportability and incompatibility challenges the Group had been experiencing.

Stratus ftServer platforms prevent downtime and data loss for essential business applications and services before it occurs, without a performance hit. They eliminate the complexity and cost associated with deploying and managing alternative high-availability and virtualization software solutions and are ideal for remote regional offices, as well as corporate data centres. Advanced lockstep technology, automated monitoring (Automated Uptime Software Layer™) and proactive management and service combine to provide an affordable always-on solution unmatched by conventional servers or low-end clusters. The Automated Uptime Software Layer identifies, manages and takes corrective action on failed components before they impact operations by monitoring more than 500 system components. System generated hot-swappable customer replacement units are easily installed without the need for user intervention or specialized skills, while ftServer and business operations continue.

The Results

By replacing the multiple servers and external storage with a single ftServer in each store, Stratus has provided Dis-Chem with a simpler and more available solution to run VMware, allowing all store functionality to run as virtual machines that are protected and always on.

The deployment of the Stratus solution has resulted in increased business functionality, revenue protection, and because there is no longer any downtime, it has successfully eradicated any customer dissatisfaction.

For Kim Sim, Group IT & Projects Executive at Dis-Chem the main benefits are twofold. “There have been two significant benefits gained from using the ftServers. Firstly, there has been no downtime in those environments and thereby no negative impact on our business. In addition, the installation was so easy and the monitoring and support we have received has been exceptional, greatly minimizing any risks to our business,” she explains.

There has also been a drastic improvement in terms of staff support. Dis-Chem staff no longer have to function in panic mode—they have adopted a more proactive and planned approach through the use of Stratus’ remote monitoring and management tools.

Owing to the success of the project, going forward as need or opportunity arises, all new Dis-Chem stores will be equipped with Stratus’ always-on technology.

About Stratus Technologies

Stratus Technologies’ solutions enable rapid deployment of always-on infrastructures, from enterprise servers to clouds, without any changes to your applications. Stratus products (software and servers) combined with Stratus people, enable customers to prevent downtime before it occurs, ensuring uninterrupted 24/7/365 performance of essential business operations.

To learn more, visit www.stratus.com.



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