



MKS Toolkit Case Study

Siemens Nixdorf Informationssysteme AG

By the year 2000, industry analysts estimate that shipments of Windows workstations will outpace RISC-based UNIX workstations by nearly 1.3 million to 845,000. By these estimates and others like it, the outlook for the Windows marketplace is bright. Yet, making the switch from UNIX to the Windows platform can be daunting, leaving corporations asking the question, "How can we take advantage of Windows, yet still leverage all of our training and investment in UNIX?"

Siemens Nixdorf Informationssysteme AG (SNI), one of the world's computer giants, has found the answer in MKS Toolkit for Developers (formerly MKS Toolkit). SNI is providing a copy of this popular and market-leading suite of UNIX utilities for WIN 32 on every copy of its SNI Scenic-Celsius NT workstation. With MKS Toolkit and its 200+ UNIX commands, professional developers have a native Windows environment at their fingertips with all the programming power of a robust UNIX workstation.

Siemens Nixdorf brought the first generation of its high-end Windows workstation called Scenic-Celsius, to the market in 1995, and has since followed on with a second generation of the product, which began shipping in October 1996. Siemens' approach to the Windows workstation marketplace is simple: provide a turn-key programming platform for customers, combining lightning-fast hardware with best-of-breed software.

Typically, workstations such as the Scenic-Celsius are put to sophisticated use, running applications such as CAD/CAM, electrical circuit simulation, medical and diagnostic imaging, and pre-print publishing processes. Each of these heavy-duty industrial applications demands such functionality as an advanced storage mechanism, high resolution graphics capability, and superior processing speed. Therefore, each Scenic-Celsius machine ships with a 100 or 200 MHz Pentium processor, EDO RAM of 512 MB, a True-Color 1600X1200 Pixel, and Ultra Wide SCSI.

While the hardware setup is definitely oriented toward the applications that run on the workstation, the software on the Scenic-Celsius is carefully selected with the user in mind. The workstation ships with several pre-installed software packages, providing a complete programming platform designed to maximize developer productivity. Software shipped with the platform includes Microsoft Word, X Windows, and an NFS viewer for all file formats. Since October, Scenic-Celsius has also begun shipping a copy of MKS Toolkit with each platform.

Why The Look And Feel Of UNIX?

Providing a complete hardware and software workstation package satisfies only one of Siemens Nixdorf's objectives for Scenic-Celsius. The other is to provide UNIX-trained users with a comfortable development environment where they can be instantly productive. This is where MKS Toolkit becomes a key part of the SNI

Company:

Siemens Nixdorf
Informationssysteme AG

Location:

Munich, with offices worldwide

Business:

Computer hardware, software

Vital Statistics:

One of the world's largest computer equipment manufacturers, with more than 37,500 employees

Need:

Robust UNIX utilities for the Windows platform to transform SNI Windows workstations into robust development environment for client/server and Web

Solution:

MKS Toolkit



Windows solution.

MKS Toolkit is a complete set of 200+ commands and utilities used by professionally-trained UNIX developers and administrators for file exchange, data manipulation, and scripting on the Windows platforms. MKS Toolkit's complete set of robust tools turns a Windows machine into a high performance UNIX workstation, making any UNIX-trained developer instantly productive and at home in this new WIN 32 environment. For example, using MKS Toolkit, Scenic-Celsius users can read and write magnetic UNIX backup tapes and files. In addition, MKS Toolkit's popular KornShell also gives Scenic-Celsius software developers the ability to port UNIX scripts to the WIN 32 environment without altering or rewriting them, and to perform sophisticated batch programming far beyond the capabilities found in DOS and Windows. Dr. Bernd Kosch, Siemens Nixdorf Director of Workstations, PC Products Division in Munich, says, "With MKS Toolkit, Scenic-Celsius provides all of the essential UNIX functionality missing on Windows."

Selecting The Right Solution

Siemens Nixdorf did not make its decision to ship MKS Toolkit with Scenic-Celsius lightly. MKS Toolkit, like all of the software products pre-installed on the platform, had to first undergo six months of rigorous testing and competitive analysis. During this period, MKS Toolkit was put through a strict set of checks and balances looking at its existing functionality and stability. MKS's planned extensions to the product were also considered.

In every aspect of testing, MKS Toolkit performed with flying colors. Indeed, it was the only UNIX utility package tested by SNI to contain all of the required UNIX functionality; no small matter, considering that a key requirement for SNI was to come as close as possible to complete UNIX functionality. Yet another plus for MKS Toolkit was its compatibility with industry-accepted UNIX standards, including POSIX.1, POSIX.2, XPG4, and UNIX System Five through to BSD.

With the high quality standards set out by Siemens Nixdorf, only one product was able to meet the computer company's requirement for absolute data integrity; again, that product was MKS Toolkit.

But performance and quality were only two measures in the testing process. MKS Toolkit also was checked for interoperability with other tools on the SNI Windows platform. Applications that even hinted of a crash were tossed from the ring immediately. MKS Toolkit was absolutely stable.

Last but not least, MKS brought to SNI interesting plans for MKS Toolkit's future on the Web. As with many workstation vendors, the Internet and Intranet are important future markets for Siemens Nixdorf and the Scenic-Celsius. Creation and publishing of Web pages are particularly key.

A Look Forward To The Web

MKS Toolkit 5.2, shipping as of November 1, 1996, includes several new tools specifically for software developers working in the Web environment. These developers have the same requirement for UNIX tools on the Windows platform.

For example, "web" is a new tool that allows developers to access URLs from the command line. With this feature, MKS Toolkit's powerful text manipulation tools can now be used on Web-site content and programs. Perl is a popular programming language used for creating CGI scripts, and a powerful language for manipulating data and text. And finally, "mkscgi" gives MKS Toolkit users the ability to energize Web pages by operating scripts on the Web server and acting as a communication vehicle through which information is transferred between the server and the browser. The program allows Web pages to interact with databases and other information sources, ultimately creating a more dynamic Web page. Used in conjunction with Perl scripts, mkscgi offers a powerful enhancement to the work of any Web developer or the Web site itself.



In Summary

Siemens Nixdorf Informationssysteme AG chose MKS Toolkit to round out its Scenic-Celsius Windows platform because it was the best tool to satisfy its customers' critical demands for robust functionality, stability and interoperability. Now UNIX developers can move with confidence to the SNI Windows environment, knowing that the transition can be smooth and non-disruptive. And equally, IT managers can rest easy knowing that they are getting the best of both the Windows and UNIX worlds from Siemens Nixdorf and MKS.

Says Dr. Bernd Kosch, "MKS Toolkit helps alleviate the fears our users may have about their move to Windows."

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