

Mercian Labels blogs case study in open source software migration

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Mercian Labels has commenced its migration away from Microsoft to Open Source software because of reliability and upgrade cost concerns. Supported by Senokian Solutions, the company is blogging its experiences of moving a whole small business IT infrastructure to open source, offering a vital case study resource for SMEs considering a similar move.

Mercian Labels, a UK security label printer, undertook a detailed cost benefit analysis of its existing IT infrastructure before taking the strategic decision to migrate to the open source model. Major historical weakness in the existing systems such as damage to mission critical servers from viruses, uncontrollable system changes, security threats and difficult and expensive upgrade paths made the migration decision comparatively easy.

Dr Adrian Steele, Managing Director of Mercian Labels said “We found Senokian early on in the project, and as open source specialists they were ideally placed to support us on the journey. Whilst open source software has many advantages over traditional desktop suppliers, it is “free, as in speech, not beer”. This means that whilst the majority of open source desktop software does not have to be purchased, license savings have to be offset against the significant training and migration investment, and higher costs of consultancy support.”

Mercian labels did a full cost benefit analysis of the 6 month migration project for a 20 person SME business, and believe that the return on investment will be about 1 year, accounting for internal development costs, hardware, consultancy and staff retraining. The lack of quality case studies for small businesses making the open source move prompted Mercian to blog details of their migration, including the detailed strategic arguments, cost benefit analysis and technical options and problems encountered through the journey for the benefit of other like minded firms. The company blog is at www.selfadhesivelabels.com/blog

“Like many businesses, we see customer pressure towards more online functionality, and the web 2.0 model demanded that we move our custom built CRM systems online. It was a natural decision to reassess the whole strategy, and we believe that a new infrastructure will give us significantly enhanced reliability, control and lower costs in the medium to long term.” said Adrian.

Senokian advised a new thick client system using mostly existing hardware, using the Ubuntu Linux LAMP stack, with Zimbra email and calendaring, Trixbox VOIP phone system and a new bespoke web based CRM system built in PHP on the reliable PostgreSQL database.

Jake Stride, Managing Director of Senokian Solutions said “Its great to be working with Adrian and his team at Mercian Labels as they migrate their systems to a more reliable and secure Open Source system. The new functionality and integration they will be able to achieve will provide much greater flexibility and choice in terms of existing and future IT decisions.”

Mercian Labels Ltd are the UK’s specialists in short run security labels www.selfadhesivelabels.com

Senokian Solutions specialise in open source business systems www.senokian.com

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