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Solution Showcase:
CitiStreet Meets Scalability
Challenges Cost-Effectively
By Denny Yost

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CitiStreet headquarters

As a premier global benefits provider and one of the nation's largest retirement plan record keepers, CitiStreet is always looking for ways to continue providing outstanding service to customers. CitiStreet is one of the largest and most experienced global benefits providers, serving more than 9 million plan participants across all markets. Headquartered in North Quincy, MA, CitiStreet employs more than 2,500 benefit experts with offices in the U.S. and Australia.

When CitiStreet needed to quickly support increased scalability requirements and ensure availability, the company turned to JBoss for help. "CitiStreet has been using a J2EE middleware layer for our participant, contact center, and sponsor applications for a number of years," says Barry Strasnick, CIO, CitiStreet. "We had a need to dramatically increase the hardware resources available to this layer, and do it quickly. Unfortunately, our J2EE middleware vendor at the time had what we considered to be excessive licensing costs in order to support these increased resources. We had been monitoring JBoss since its inception, and were at a point where we felt comfortable switching from an expensive, proprietary middleware vendor to the much lower cost, open source-focused JBoss solution."

While making the move from a proprietary to an open source solution sounds appealing, many companies are concerned about the use of open source for mission-critical applications. This was also a concern for CitiStreet. However, since CitiStreet had experience using Apache and Linux, which are both open source solutions, the only concern was whether support from JBoss would at least be equal to

that received for Apache and Linux. Much to the surprise of CitiStreet, the support at JBoss exceeded all expectations. "We were thrilled with the support we received from JBoss during our transition and how well the software performed in production," says Strasnick. "These are business-critical applications where we would be out of business if they weren't available. On an average day, we can have more than 250,000 separate participant sessions utilizing this infrastructure. Best of all, we didn't have to go through inexperienced "level 1" support when we had already checked the obvious answers!"

The complete deployment of the JBoss solution took some time, but it was well worth making the switch. From initial planning to complete deployment onto JBoss took approximately one year. Some smaller applications were deployed within months. While it took a little time to become fully deployed, CitiStreet enjoyed considerable savings through the JBoss licensing that enabled significant hardware resources to be deployed in a very cost-effective manner.

Today, CitiStreet is quite content with its decision to use the open source JBoss solution. "JBoss continues to run very well throughout the deployment," Strasnick continues. "But what we also like is all our contacts with JBoss have been with technically knowledgeable people whether it is technical support, sales, or senior management. We were pleased with support during deployment, and we continue to be pleased with the level of support we receive." ●

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