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– HARALD NEUNER
IT IS Data Center Manager at Swarovski

SWAROVSKI INCREASES SAP SYSTEM AVAILABILITY WITH ORACLE DATA GUARD

When it comes to safeguarding SAP ERP applications, Swarovski, the world's leading manufacturer of cut crystals, opts for Oracle Data Guard. By so doing the company is increasing its SAP DBMS availability and is also in a position to respond quickly to potential faults. In this interview, Swarovski's IT IS Data Center Manager Harald Neuner tells us more about the implementation of Oracle Data Guard.

Was there a particular reason why Swarovski decided to address the issue of stability and DBMS high availability?

Neuner: Any company that uses SAP needs to look at the issue of stability. At the end of the day, non-availability of an ERP system puts business continuity at risk. Initially we implemented binary mirroring of our Oracle database with disk subsystems. But when a fault actually arose we realized that this measure wasn't enough. It didn't offer adequate protection. This was the main reason why we opted to switch from mirroring to a standby database concept.

What does 'protection' or a protection mechanism mean to you?

Neuner: We realized that physically backing up a binary DBMS mirror wasn't enough for our needs. The sticking point was the existence of logical errors. Almost every business

that uses SAP utilizes the scope for expansion- with the powerful SAP development tools. This involves the latent risk of data being deleted or accidentally changed through human error. With Oracle Data Guard we can employ an effective protection mechanism, because all transactions in the primary database are automatically and correctly transferred to the standby database after a delay of 4 hours. This time delay is a compromise between the logs created within a defined time and their integration into a secondary system, and the physical conversion process.

Why did you opt for Oracle Data Guard?

Neuner: We had, and we continue to have, a very good experience of the Oracle database in the SAP environment. So Oracle Data Guard was simply the logical choice.

How did you go about implementing Oracle Data Guard?

Neuner: The team at the Oracle for SAP Technology Center in Walldorf (Germany) helped us with the implementation of Oracle Data Guard. Together we defined a project schedule and then implemented the core tasks one step at a time. The key to it all was the configuration of Oracle Data Guard. Everything worked extremely well. We've always found that drawing on the expertise of Oracle specialists is well worth it. Above all, it enabled us to build up valuable database expertise in-house. We are now in a position to install Data Guard ourselves.

Were there any noteworthy incidents during the implementation phase?

Neuner: Everything worked very well indeed.

What is your experience of Oracle Data Guard in practice? What benefits has it brought?

Neuner: Oracle Data Guard increased the SAP DBMS high availability. The functionality of Data Guard gives us security and also the peace of mind of knowing that if a fault arises, we can carry on working with SAP within a defined period of time. With Oracle Data Guard we can switch easily to other DB servers and know that it works. We also carry out annual practice drills for the worst-case scenario. And, knock on wood, we've never had occasion to actually switch to a different host.

Do you have any further plans in terms of Oracle Data Guard?

Neuner: After the positive experience we've had with Oracle Data Guard, which we're using for our ERP systems, we're endeavoring to support more SAP systems with this solution. We are also about to take a decision as to the next stage in system stability, and Oracle RAC is the front runner.

Oracle: Strategic SAP database

Swarovski has been working with SAP R/3 since 1995. Previously, the world-famous company based in Wattens, Austria, relied on SAP R/2. About two and a half years ago the company switched to Oracle on Unix, abandoning the Windows operating system for its database systems. In Wattens the company operates two physically separate data centers. SAP is used as the central system to which all branch offices and subsidiaries have access. Worldwide, an average of around 2000 users work with mission-critical ERP applications at Swarovski. Oracle (as yet 9*i*) is used as the strategic SAP database.

In 1895, Bohemian immigrant and visionary businessman Daniel Swarovski I took up residence in the Tyrolean village of Wattens (Austria) with his newest invention, a revolutionary machine for the mechanical grinding of crystal gems. This innovation, which would later captivate the international fashion scene, made Swarovski the world's leading manufacturer of precision-cut crystals. Today, these crystals can be found in the fashion and jewelry industry and in the world of lighting, architecture and interior design. The global company, which still has its headquarters in Wattens in the Tyrol and is now managed by the 4th and 5th generations of the family, does business in over 120 countries. In 2006, with a total of 20,000 employees, Swarovski generated a turnover of €2.37 billion. Swarovski manufactures and markets crystal components under two brand names, CRYSTALLIZED™ – Swarovski Elements for fashion and design and STRASS® Swarovski® Crystal for architecture and lighting. While Swarovski crystals have become an indispensable part of the creations of international designers, the Swarovski jewelry and home decor collections are marketed in all the world's major cities through more than 1150 of the company's own stores and through authorized dealers. One example is the Daniel Swarovski Collection, the company's couture line and flagship collection, which faithfully reflects the ideas and visions of the company founder. The Swarovski Crystal Society currently has almost 400,000 members, enthusiastic collectors of the popular crystal figures, and the Swarovski Crystal Worlds in Wattens have attracted over 7 million visitors since their opening in 1995. In the Chambers of Wonder at the Crystal Worlds, Swarovski celebrates the mystique of crystals and presents a fascinating, sparkling dream world that in the space of just a few years has become one of Austria's most popular visitor destinations. The company also owns four independent entities: Tyrolit® manufactures grinding tools, Swareflex makes reflector systems for road traffic, Swarovski Optik produces high-precision optical equipment, and Signity is Swarovski's brand for unique gemstones.

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