

Windows 2000 Based
Fault Tolerant Server

NEC Express5800/ft series

Case Study

Naha City Hall

A new IT promotion office was established in the Administrative Management Section of Naha City Hall in April of 2001. An 'e-City Hall' came alive as a result. Operation began in September of 2001, utilizing a fault-tolerant server 'NEC Express5800/ft series' and an NEC groupware product, 'StarOffice'. In addition to reconstructing its documentation management system, the government is making efforts to ultimately create a new 'knowledge-sharing' system, therefore improving both information-sharing and operational efficiency.

Unhalted operations with the NEC Express5800/ft series and Groupware to realize an 'e-City Hall'

A fast-track IT plan for Naha City Hall

The enormous task for the 'e-Japan Strategy', as announced by the IT Strategy Headquarters of the Japanese government in January of 2001, is to 'make Japan the world's leading IT nation within 5 years'. The computerization of government agencies is one of the important steps in this process.

In the City Hall of the capital city of Naha, an IT Promotion Office was also set up on the island of Okinawa. Local government agencies of Okinawa and the municipal office of Naha are actively working towards the computerization of their services to create an 'e-City Hall'. Mr. Masami Uezu, the Director of the IT Promotion Office in the Administrative Management Agency at Naha City Hall, says that the first big step is sharing of information by the office staff. Up till now, while working in the Finance department, his job had given him a view of the computer field. He then realized that they were already using groupware, and saw how useful it really was.

He says, "I felt the convenience of groupware for the distribution of documents". In case of hardcopies of a document, one would often not know where it was being circulated. The document may get buried in a pile of paperwork and causes the circulation of the document to stop. However, when the circulation of a document is done

electronically, recipients can read the document in any order when they have time. At a glance, we can also see who has or has not yet read the document.

Under a trial bases, at first, the groupware was installed in the Administrative Management Agency, the governing body of the IT Promotion Office. This led the office staff themselves to understand how useful the groupware really was. When the work environment, in all agencies, changed to where every worker had his or her own exclusive PC, groupware was deployed to all of them.

Though the decision of which type of groupware and hardware needed was quickly determined, the specifics of which exact system was to be integrated, was a very steady, time consuming decision. Mr. Hiroshi Nakamoto, the Project Manager in the IT Promotion Office, who led the Selection Committee, stated, "We conducted a two-step selection process". He explained that in order to gather a wide-range of information, the specifications required by City Hall, was disclosed to a number of vendors. Six primary drafts were then proposed. The Committee then worked these drafts down to three. Finally a demonstration and presentation for the remaining three system proposals were conducted. These processes were finished within a span of one month.



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The StarOffice Groupware and the NEC Express5800/ft series were chosen for their operability and system stability

The computer system, which the Selection Committee had specified, required that it contain all of the groupware functions already in use by the Administrative Management Agency, and also the ability to handle information sharing. The specifications were set based on these requirements.

Ultimately, from the proposals given by the different vendors, the Selection Committee chose the proposal created by the NEC Corporation, Okinawa branch.

Mr. Nakamoto stated that because the proposal clearly showed what the NEC system could and could not provide, it was very easy to comprehend. He and his staff could have faith in its entirety, to meet their needs.

NEC proposed a combination of 'StarOffice',

an NEC groupware product, and the NEC Express5800/ft series. 'StarOffice' had already been implemented in over 100 local municipalities across Japan. NEC's server system had also already attained a solid reputation for being easy to use, with specifications matching both governments and commercial businesses.

The NEC Express5800/ft series is the world's first fault tolerant IA (Intel Architecture) server, installing Windows 2000 Advanced Server. This server allows for high fault tolerance through redundant hardware, and is equipped with 'NEC ESMPRO', a server management software for integrated control of the NEC Express5800 servers.

According to Mr. Nakamoto, there were two main reasons why the NEC proposal was far better than the others. The first reason was StarOffice's operability. Because the user interface did not require complicated operations, it was easy to understand, and judged that it would be easier for the elderly to use.

Mr. Nakamoto also stated that it was a proposal that offered system stability. By implementing an alternative system, there would have been a risk of having to shut down the system for at least 15 to 30 minutes if a fault were to occur. When the impact on the over 2,000 office staff in Naha City Hall is factored, and from the vantage point of the importance of public services, there was no way that this kind of system shutdown could ever be permitted.

Mr. Nakamoto looks back on that time, "While the proposals of other vendors merely offered

ordinary alternative systems, NEC proposed a system that would not have to be shut down, even with an occurrence of a hardware failure. When I heard this, I thought whether it really could be true?" So, it appears that it was a shock for him.

In reality, the Selection Committee required explanation from NEC many times, as they were not convinced immediately of such a system. NEC explained that the system is a sort of two PC servers performing the same functions, installed into one rack. Even if an error were to occur in one of the servers, the system can continue operation by simply isolating the faulty server. After NEC's meticulous illustration of the server system, the Selection Committee finally made their decision.

The NEC Express5800/ft series fits into one rack, in comparison to ordinary alternative systems that would use two PC Servers. In addition to taking up less space, it keeps costs low.

Aiming at an e-City Hall by invigorating knowledge and document management

With Construction finished, allowing the NEC Express5800/ft series to be implemented, tests began at the end of September. A seminar was held in the beginning of October for 100 IT leaders from each of the sections. Mr. Nakamoto stated to the audience, "Test operations have gone on for one month and the system has never gone down, not even once. Also as a result of upgrades through practical used by many municipalities, I can feel the improvement in the operability of 'StarOffice'." For example, setting of data

USER PROFILE

Naha City



Naha is located in the southern part of Okinawa's main island, the largest in the Okinawa island chain. This is also the site of Okinawa's prefectural offices. Okinawa is situated between Taiwan and Kagoshima Prefecture (southern tip of Kyushu Island). Naha's population as of the end of August 2001 is 304,777 (147,435 men and 157,432 women). There are 116,870 households. Naha has an area of 38.6 square Kilometers. Naha celebrated its 80th anniversary as a city on May 20, 2001.

access rights is very detailed. 'StarOffice' was most suitable for municipalities, who require strict access rights

Mr. Uezu and Mr. Nakamoto hope that this system will energize City Hall. Mr. Uezu stated, "While we have had our traditional methods for document management, we should be able to make our system more efficient". They hope that the implementation of 'StarOffice' will lead to a better solution for document management.

Mr. Nakamoto says, "By sharing stores of knowledge, we want to utilize this opportunity to create government services with new ideas, and not be satisfied simply by sharing of information."

With the goal of creating an e-City Hall, they are planning to take countermeasures against computer viruses and hackers in the future, and sometime in the fiscal year of 2001, connect to the Internet. In line with measures taken by the nation, on top of having personal authentication installed, If City Hall can learn to gather information and learn to deliver information to their residents through the use of the Internet, applications, notices, facility reservations and so on can be done via the internet. If this can be achieved, then the birth of an 'e-City Hall', energized by groupware and the Internet, is not that far away. The NEC Express5800/ft series strongly supports the information infrastructure for this purpose.

Source: NIKKEI COMPUTER Nov.5, 2001

