



Midwest Microwave, an international manufacturer of RF/Microwave Components and Cable Assemblies, with plants in the US and United Kingdom, had based their operations on a system which most might consider legacy, and had done so since 1991. This same VAX based system had provided 99.99% uptime against unscheduled outages and yet continued to allow for the efficient manufacture and distribution of our products, but was running out of steam.

With the increase in database size and user load, along with the challenge that the existing hardware could not be expanded, that new replacement VAX hardware was no longer an option, and that migrating to an Alpha solution had both technical limitations as well as prohibitive cost structures, we turned to SRI for a potential solution.

Our greatest concern with SRI's Charon-VAX product was not the product itself, but the fact that it was dependent on Windows 2000 to exist, and run. Most long time VMS shops, like Midwest, went to great lengths to avoid core IT dependences on Windows based systems because of the blatant security and instability issues associated with Windows, when compared to the rock-solid security and stability of VMS.

After more than three months of intensive evaluation of Charon-VAX in our own labs, with the invaluable aid of Stan Quayle of Quayle Consulting and SRI, we confirmed for ourselves that a properly configured Windows system could be stabilized with minimal services running so that Windows would not be an element in the VMS reliability equation. Once the Windows hurdle was handled, we proceeded with the acquisition of Charon-VAX/XL Plus DIT along with a Tyan dual processor based system using Athlon 2600+ processors, 2 GB of RAM, four 15K RPM 36 GB U320 SCSI disks connected via an embedded Adaptec controller, another Adaptec U160 channel for an external SCSI RAID array, and a third Adaptec UW SCSI channel for external DLT, 4mm, and VXA tape drives.

With this final configuration, the system performs in the 50 VUP range and allows us to observe most heavy database jobs completing in about 20 to 25% of their original wall-clock run time. Overall, I couldn't be more pleased with the Charon-VAX/AMD based solution and can honestly expect this configuration to allow Midwest to continue to run and grow our existing software system for at least the next five years, and perhaps easily ten or more.

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