



# WHOLE FOODS REDUCED COSTS AND INCREASED PERFORMANCE AND MANAGEABILITY OF BUSINESS-CRITICAL APPLICATIONS WITH RED HAT SOLUTIONS

## FAST FACTS

Customer	Whole Foods
Industry	Consumer
Geography	North America
Business Challenge	Needed a cost-effective operating platform and complementary management solution that would scale with the company's growth while increasing the security, manageability, and availability of business-critical applications
Software	Red Hat Enterprise Linux, Red Hat Cluster Suite, Red Hat Global File System (GFS), Red Hat Satellite, Red Hat Consulting
Hardware	75 HP x86 servers, 16 virtual servers
Benefits	Obtained an easy-to-use and reliable systems management solution that enabled increased productivity and reduced costs by increasing system administrator efficiency; Experienced increased performance and internal-user satisfaction of homegrown applications, including order processing applications.



## BACKGROUND

Founded in 1980 in Austin, Texas, Whole Foods Market ([www.wholefoodsmarket.com](http://www.wholefoodsmarket.com)) is a leader in the natural and organic foods industry and was America's first national certified organic grocer. In fiscal year 2008, the company had sales of \$8 billion and currently has more than 275 stores, nine distribution centers, and more than 54,000 team members in the United States, Canada, and the United Kingdom.

"Simply put, with Red Hat Satellite I am able to manage the provisioning, updates, patching, and maintenance of our entire Red Hat environment myself, which would be very difficult otherwise. A result is in cost benefits and resource efficiency gains due to our high Red Hat administrator-to-system ratio."

-Bryan Pennington, senior Linux systems administrator  
at Whole Foods

## BUSINESS CHALLENGE

Since opening its first store in 1980, Whole Foods has experienced rapid business growth and success at both the national and international levels driven by the market's desire for natural and organic products available in a friendly, neighborhood shopping experience. As the business grew and technology advancements were made, Whole Foods IT department began evaluating technology solutions and vendors that would enable cost-effective expansion of its IT infrastructure while simultaneously meeting the performance demands of its internal technology users. The company needed a stable and reliable operating system to run its business-critical home-grown ordering systems and its middleware environment. The company also realized the need for a reliable management solution that would enable its IT staff to focus on strategic projects.

## SOLUTION

After testing and cost evaluations, Whole Foods selected Red Hat Enterprise Linux running on commodity HP x86 servers to run some of its critical order processing and middleware environment components. It also selected Red Hat Satellite as its Linux systems management solution.

"As a cost-conscious company, our IT department is always looking at ways to cut costs without sacrificing performance. More and more of our leadership team is recognizing that Red Hat Enterprise Linux is an easy way to do that. Take for example our other major UNIX platforms. While they are stable environments, the hardware, license, and support costs are prohibitive. With Red Hat on an x86 platform, it is a significant difference. In addition to the direct cost benefits, Red Hat Satellite's management tools allow us to focus on strategic business initiatives," said Bryan Pennington, senior systems administrator at Whole Foods.

Currently, with more than 90 servers deployed, Red Hat Enterprise Linux is the largest UNIX operating system environment at Whole Foods. As the performance of the order processing applications and middleware are highly important programs to the internal customers, Whole Foods' Enterprise Linux deployment is considered mission-critical to its business.

"Our order processing applications are critical to our daily business operations, and if these systems are down, orders are not put through, deliveries could be delayed, and products might be unavailable to our customers," said Pennington. "With Red Hat, we have experienced the stability, reliability, and performance we expected and required, and have not encountered interruptions to our daily business operations."

Whole Foods used the expertise of Red Hat Consulting to install and deploy Red Hat Satellite to manage its Red Hat systems. Built on open standards, Red Hat Satellite provides powerful systems administration capabilities such as management, provisioning, and monitoring for large Linux deployments. Pennington, a Red Hat Certified Technician (RHCT) himself, found great value in the Red Hat Consulting team. "Our Red Hat Consultant worked with us side-by-side during the installation, answered all of our questions, provided best practices, and has checked in with us routinely since the engagement," said Pennington.

In 2008, Whole Foods began using Red Hat Cluster Suite and Red Hat Global File System (GFS) to further improve system administration through enhanced system backup and failover services.



## BENEFITS

Pennington attributes Red Hat Satellite's reliable and easy-to-use management capabilities with cutting company costs. "Red Hat Satellite has allowed us to reallocate resources," said Pennington. "We've been able to assign new hires in strategic business roles because Red Hat Satellite's management capabilities allow me to manage all of the systems without the additional help. Help would be nice, but with Red Hat Satellite, it's not as needed."

The increased performance of some of the homegrown applications resulted in increased internal user satisfaction and the opportunity to grow the Red Hat technology presence at Whole Foods.

"Our internal applications running Red Hat Enterprise Linux are critical to our business and we have complete trust in Red Hat technology and support," said Pennington. "Our decision to select Red Hat was the right one, and we have never looked back."

With the use of Red Hat Satellite and PXE boot, new servers are able to quickly be provisioned, configured, and available for use by application teams.

The knowledge transfer with Red Hat Consulting was valuable to the Whole Foods IT team, as the information gained and best practices put into place have saved time and resources since deployment.

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