

CHALLENGE	SOLUTION	BENEFIT
Create a robust, scalable IT environment that can meet the demands of a growing ASP market	A flexible three-tier architecture based on Dell™ PowerEdge™ servers running Intel® Pentium® III Xeon™ processors, Dell PowerVault™ storage, and Microsoft® software solutions	Enhanced infrastructure reliability and scalability and renewed preparedness for future growth

Applications for rent— in the Persian Gulf

Dell helps ASPGulf, a leading application service provider in the Middle East, improve its infrastructure to meet the region's growing IT needs

Internet hosting services for software applications are big business—and small- to medium-size firms that have limited IT budgets find such services particularly attractive. For those companies providing the services, demands on their own IT departments and data centers are extraordinary: they require the greatest availability, scalability of equipment, and flexibility in the IT infrastructure.

ASPGulf is such a hosting service. As a leading application service provider (ASP) in the Middle East, ASPGulf enables access to world-class business applications without the traditional costs and challenges. Founded in April 2000 and headquartered in Dubai, United Arab Emirates (UAE)—the Middle East's technology hub—ASPGulf has introduced a new method for accessing and operating IT systems in the region.

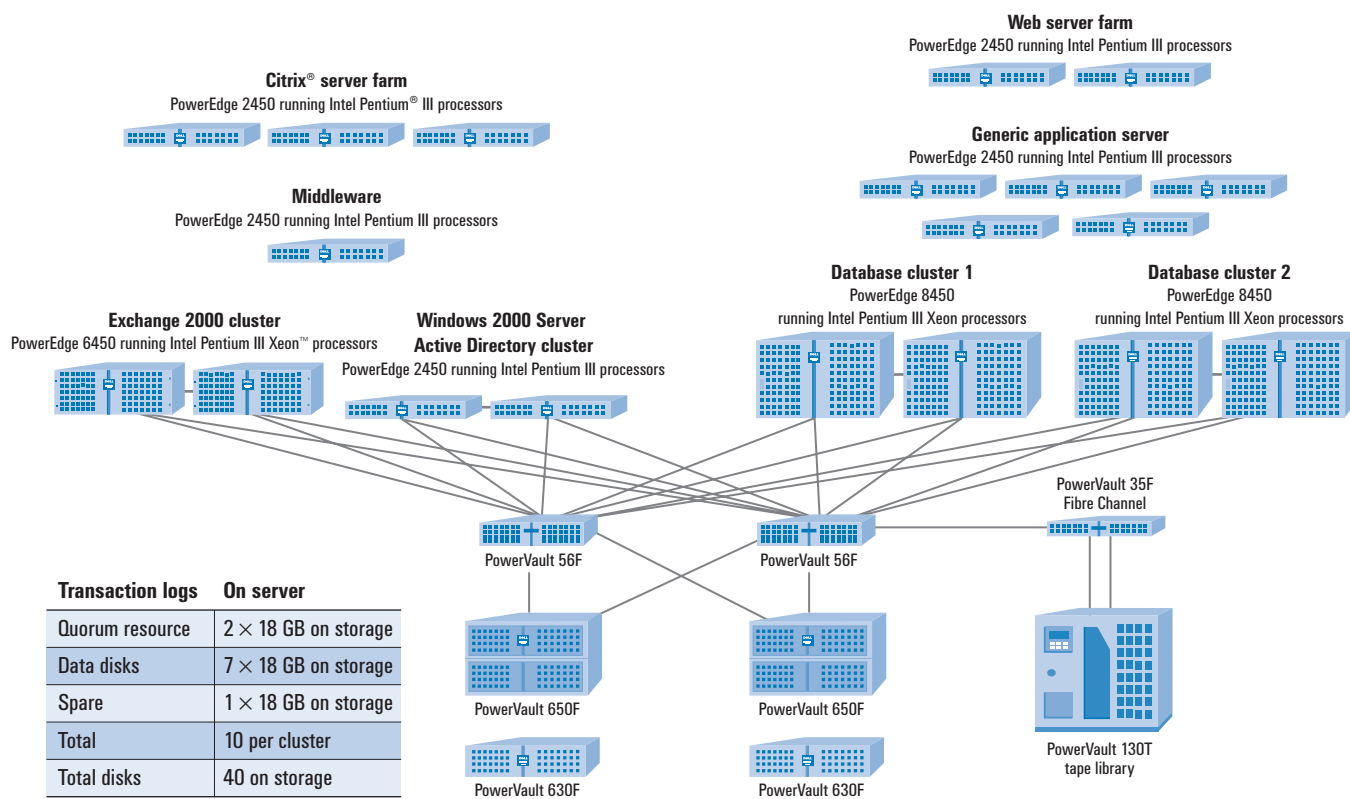
ASPGulf's mission as an application provisioning service is to provide best-of-breed Arabic and English enterprise applications over the Internet. The company's services are designed to reduce the complexity and total cost of ownership (TCO) of enterprise

computing while improving the quality of IT services for small- to medium-size businesses in the Middle East. In addition, ASPGulf offers clients in-depth understanding of the complexities associated with running today's heterogeneous IT infrastructures and the special business requirements in the Persian Gulf region.

Building the data center and a partnership

ASPGulf provides financial and human resources, procurement, distribution, customer relationship management (CRM) applications, productivity tools, and messaging and collaboration tools on a rental basis for a monthly fee. The company's services are underpinned by networking services provided by Dubai Internet City (DIC), which offers modern, fully serviced office space that caters to the specific needs of today's new-economy companies, including the need for both wired and wireless networks.

"At Dubai Internet City, we have set up the first live data center in the Persian Gulf region to address the region's increasing interest in and demand for hosted applications," says Duncan Watson,



ASPGulf worked closely with Dell and Microsoft to build its three-tier server and storage architecture

CEO of ASPGulf. The DIC data center also is the first complete IT and telecommunications center in the world built inside a free trade zone.

Watson continues, “We have used the leading technologies to build a state-of-the-art data center that includes server farms, networking components, physical security, the ASPGulf Operation Centre, a storage area network (SAN), operating system and databases, network management platform, and other components required to provision applications and hosting services.”

Refurbishing the infrastructure with Dell

Early on, ASPGulf began working closely with Microsoft to lay the groundwork for the operating system and applications for ASPGulf’s product offerings. In evaluating hardware options, Watson says, “We believe it is critical for us to own and manage the hosted environment; that’s a critical component behind delivery of the service. We want to ensure that we’re offering the most robust environment possible.”

“When looking at hardware vendors, we wanted a company that would partner with us and be truly interested in the success of our business and provide the right support. We reviewed

proposals from virtually all of the big players in the enterprise storage and server market,” says Watson. “We chose Dell for several reasons, but particularly because Dell was not just trying to sell us a solution. The sale was only the beginning of our relationship; we now meet with our Dell™ representative regularly to review our technical requirements and resolve any current or future issues.”

Intel® processor-based Dell equipment is fully certified on the Microsoft® Windows® 2000 platform, and the strength of the Dell and Microsoft global alliance means that the two companies can quickly provide comprehensive support as technology evolves.

“The key differentiator was Dell’s overall approach and responsiveness; they were able to provide a multitier architecture to fit our needs,” Watson adds.

Designing the three-tiered infrastructure

ASPGulf worked closely with Dell in designing its three-tier infrastructure, which provides the scalability and flexibility necessary for the company’s future growth. The first tier, which supports Web



services, runs on Dell PowerEdge™ 2450¹ servers. PowerEdge 2450 servers also are used for the company's application servers on the second tier. On the back end of the infrastructure, the Microsoft Active Directory®, e-mail, and database services run on the Intel processor-based PowerEdge 2450, PowerEdge 6450¹, and PowerEdge 8450 servers.

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— **Duncan Watson**
Chief Executive Officer
ASPGulf

The company also selected Dell storage products to support its services, including the Dell PowerVault™ 650F¹, a highly available and scalable Fibre Channel RAID storage system, and the PowerVault 630F¹ storage expansion enclosure. In addition, ASPGulf implemented Dell PowerVault 56F high-speed Fibre Channel switches for the SAN interconnect storage and the SAN-attached PowerVault 130T¹ DLT tape library. Together, these products allow unattended backup and recovery of up to 2 TB of compressed data.

Emirates Computers, a technology company based in the UAE, supplied and supported the Dell servers and storage systems.

Offering more than just a supplier-buyer relationship

Rapid deployment was a key issue for ASPGulf. “The ability to source, build, test, and install equipment within three to four weeks is phenomenal,” Watson says.

¹ Newer models are available at <http://www.dell.com>.

The relationship between ASPGulf and Dell is “not a normal supplier-buyer relationship,” Watson adds. “We meet with Dell about every two weeks for technology refreshes and quarterly to review the product portfolio. We engage with Dell on every complex customer requirement; Dell is very helpful in this area. And as part of our alliance, we have an on-site certified Dell engineer for a full 18 months. He has provided an enormous transfer of knowledge and become one of our team members.”

Watson continues, “One of our objectives is to meet the strong demand in the Middle East markets and give advantages to midsize businesses in each location. We plan to adopt new technologies because of the efficiencies that can be achieved with new product lines, and Dell is a key component of those expansion plans.”

Gareth Williams, general manager of Dell Computer FZ LLC in Dubai, says, “Dell believes that ASPGulf is delivering a highly important new service in the UAE, and that its first-mover advantage will not only help to grow the Middle East ASP market, but also will give rise to enormous growth in ASPGulf's business. We are taking an active role in supporting the company in that period of growth.”

Using critical relationships to establish reliable services

ASPGulf's relationships with DIC, Microsoft, and especially Dell have enabled the company to deliver reliable IT services to businesses throughout the Middle East. “We are confident,” Watson says, “that the solutions provided through ASPGulf and our partners will deliver the absolute reliability in services that we need in order to give our customers the absolute reliability that they expect.”

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