

Case Study



Securities Firm Derives Superior Business Performance and Scalability using Grid Computing

Abstract

A leading securities firm partnered with Infosys to address business performance and scalability issues in its Interest Rate Risk Analysis application. Using Infosys' High Performance Computing solutions, the client was able to improve the performance of the application by 150 times by porting the application to a Grid environment. The solution improved the scalability of the application by supporting 500 products as opposed to 57 earlier, enabling the client to easily introduce new products, thus removing a constraint to business growth.

The Client

The client is a leading investment banking and securities firm. It provides individual investors and corporate clients with a broad range of services, including investment advisory services and securities underwriting. It provides corporate clients with a wide array of services like investment management support, M&A financial advisory services, and underwriting stock and bond issues based on its strong research and solution-delivering capabilities.

Background

The client was facing performance and scalability issues with its existing Risk Analysis application for Mortgage-backed Securities. The C/C++ based application, running on Solaris, could not support the addition of new financial products thus constraining their business growth. The performance of the application was also impacting the time taken by traders and research analysts to do risk analysis relating to the convexity and duration of bonds, as it took approximately 180 minutes to generate risk reports for 57 products. As this was a roadblock to business growth, it was imperative for the client to improve the performance of the application.

In the quest to improve performance and scalability, the client was faced with a number of challenges. The key challenges were:

- The application involved numerous mathematical functions. So, the opportunities for performance improvement using traditional approaches, like code tuning, were extremely limited.
- The application did not cater to running multiple concurrent threads. Hence, multithreading was not a viable option to improve performance and scalability.
- Floating point accuracy of the output was crucial to the calculations which limited the options for tuning the compiler.
- Parallelizing the application was an option. Choosing the right degree of parallelism was a challenge. It was constrained by the availability of the CPU and by the capability of the middleware to handle tasks fired

Infosys' Solution

The client engaged with Infosys to address these performance and scalability issues. As part of the engagement, Infosys used a pro-active and holistic performance engineering approach to amplify the performance and scalability of the application. Infosys was supported by the client's infrastructure partner & worked closely with the client's IT team. The approach involved:

- Analyzing the application with the objective of introducing parallelization to address performance issues.
- Evaluating different degrees of parallelization, using tools such as Platform's Symphony and Gemstone's Gemfire, to determine optimal performance
- Addressing compiler issues by changing from GNU GCC to Intel ICC and tuning the compiler to maximize performance without sacrificing floating point accuracy
- Using Infosys' patent-pending Grid Application Migration Framework to determine the best approach for porting the application to run in a Grid environment
- Identifying critical sections of the application that could be distributed across a Grid.
- Evaluating and using commercially available Grid middleware platforms to maintain grid clusters and facilitate load balancing.
- Introducing a data caching mechanism to reduce performance overhead by limiting data movement between nodes of the Grid
- Working with the client's infrastructure partner to interact with Platform and Gemstone and resolve issues with the Grid middleware, as the infrastructure partner supports the Grid infrastructure for the client

Benefits

The client derived significant improvement in application performance among other benefits:

- The time taken to generate reports dropped from 180 minutes to 1 minute for 57 products. This improvement allows the application to process 500 products in less than 8 minutes
- Quicker decision making facilitated by a reduction in the time required for analysis
- The solution offers non-intrusive scalability to address future application needs as it can scale simply by adding nodes to the Grid
- Migrations costs will be reduced as the solution is upward compatible (with middleware versions)
- The solution can support both 32 and 64 bit processor architectures, broadening the range of hardware that can be adopted in the future

Technology Highlights

- Grid with 8 nodes and 32 cores running on Xeon processors
- SUSE Linux
- C / C++
- Symphony 3.2 Global Parallel File System
- Support for 32 bit & 64 bit processor architectures
- Intel ICC
- Infosys Grid Application Migration Framework as an analysis tool

Client Testimonial

“By enhancing the performance of the application significantly, we have enabled quicker decision making and improved our ability to introduce more products and understand interest rate risks within a short span of time. Infosys’ thought leadership in the High Performance Computing space and its performance engineering methodology were critical in achieving these results. Another key factor was the extensive domain knowledge demonstrated by Infosys’ in IT, financial transactions and the finance domain.”

- Executive Director

About Infosys’ Grid Application Migration Framework (GAMF)

Infosys’ GAMF, used for code analysis and design of parallel code, analyzes the application portfolio and profiles code for Grid enablement. It takes legacy programs in C, C++, or Java as input and generates a Directed Acyclic Graph (DAG) which depicts both task and data dependencies among the components of the program. Grid tasks of proper granularity are generated using a set of DAG reducing and clustering algorithms

The framework simulates the actual Grid execution by taking the reduced task graph as input and schedules the tasks on different processors in the Grid. The performance data is then analyzed to study the benefits of porting the application to Grid.



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About Infosys

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