

ACUITY SYSTEMS HELPS U.S. GOVERNMENT GAIN INSIGHT FROM BIG DATA



The General Services Administration (GSA) supports the basic functions of the US federal government and generates massive amounts of data. The organization sought a way to use this data to make more intelligent decisions. To help the GSA accomplish this goal, Acuity Systems – a technology solutions provider and Red Hat partner – built an open source platform using Red Hat technology to enable big data analytics. As a result, the GSA gained easier, unified data access and analysis, as well as the flexibility and scalability to meet growing data needs.

SOFTWARE

- Red Hat® Enterprise Linux®
- Red Hat JBoss® Data Virtualization
- Red Hat JBoss Fuse
- Red Hat JBoss BPM Suite



IT CONSULTING AND SERVICES

ANALYTICS

“Red Hat products stay fresh. That keeps Acuity fresh and allows us to respond to the market and our customers’ needs on a continuous basis.”

JEFF KENNEDY
VP OF SALES, ACUITY SYSTEMS

BENEFITS

- Unified and simplified data access to help users work more effectively
- Increased flexibility and scalability to expand platform as needs and technologies change
- Supported innovation while maintaining critical security



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PAUL SHULMAN
PRESIDENT, ACUITY SYSTEMS

UNIFYING DATA FOR BETTER ANALYSIS

The GSA is a large, vitally important part of the federal government. With 12,000 employees and an annual budget of US\$26 billion, the organization oversees US\$66 billion in procurement work for other agencies each year. In addition, the GSA manages 8,300 buildings and a 210,000-vehicle motor pool. The organization is also responsible for developing cost-minimizing policies for the entire US government.

As part of its work, the GSA collects a large volume of data from its own operations as well as from other agencies. To help its leaders make better-informed decisions, the GSA needed to unify this data for more accurate, extensive analysis. Improving analysis would help the GSA easily determine why something was happening and quickly act in response.

“The GSA came to us with a problem,” said Faton Gjuka, director of solutions consulting at Acuity Systems, an IT consulting firm. “They had many [isolated] data sources, some of which came from custom-built systems from vendors that didn’t even exist anymore – and few were designed to communicate with each other.”

BUILDING A STABLE, FLEXIBLE SOLUTION WITH RED HAT TECHNOLOGY

Acuity developed the Data to Decisions (D2D) platform to unite the GSA’s data in a common environment. This solution would simplify analytics and provide the information that executives, business users, and taxpayers need to make better decisions.

“The GSA is pulling different, isolated sources of information. A logical data warehouse will put the data in a single place, so they can understand what’s going on across the organization,” said Paul Shulman, president of Acuity Systems.

The D2D platform collects data from more than 100 data sources and 190 data sets. In addition, the platform integrates six enterprise data warehouses into one unified cloud image to run analytics.

The federal government’s mandate to use open source technologies and solutions whenever possible meant that the use of open source technology was critical to the project.

“Open source provides a more affordable solution, and one that is more scalable and typically easier to integrate and adapt to other existing solutions and technologies,” said Shulman.

As a result, Acuity chose to use several open source technologies from Red Hat to create the D2D platform:

- **Red Hat JBoss Data Virtualization** provides a self-service environment for quick data retrieval and manipulation, even for users without technical knowledge. Advanced D2D users can access and manage data sources, analytics, and reports, as well as convert document metadata to a data source.
- **Red Hat JBoss Fuse** provides critical integration and data translation functions. It lets D2D tools and software communicate and also makes data accessible and able to communicate, including unstructured, structured, and social media data.
- **Red Hat JBoss BPM Suite** orchestrates the platform’s data management processes. It makes business logic visible and understandable to business and IT users, helping them collaborate and manage change.
- **Red Hat Enterprise Linux** provides a stable, flexible platform that supports the organization’s datacenter.

The D2D platform evolved into an Analytics-as-a-Service solution that helps the GSA collect, manage, and analyze complex data and makes the results available to stakeholders throughout the government.

SOLVING BUSINESS CHALLENGES WITH AN OPEN SOURCE PLATFORM EASIER, UNIFIED DATA ACCESS

Before implementing Acuity's D2D platform, GSA departments could not easily share information that would benefit other departments.

"For instance, there was no easy way to aggregate existing C-level executive analytics in one place, which created difficulties in cross-office collaborations and data sharing," said Gjuka.

Now all departments can easily access the same information. Instead of logging into several systems and pulling reports from different programs, users can easily access data across the organization.

"The platform provides decision-ready information to let users work more effectively," said Jeff Kennedy, vice president of sales for Acuity Systems. "Now information is readily available and organized, so they can make immediate business decisions."

CONTINUOUS INNOVATION

Acuity's D2D platform collects massive amounts of data generated daily by the GSA into a unified cloud image where sophisticated analytics can be run. As a result, the GSA can gain insight for consistent daily operations and long-term planning.

Using open source technology from Red Hat helps Acuity deliver innovative solutions to the GSA with products that are continually improved by large, active communities. In addition, the inherent flexibility of open source technology also helps Acuity keep its products up-to-date. Modular architecture lets Acuity cost-effectively replace technologies when better alternatives are available, helping the firm deliver better solutions to its customers.

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INSTANT SCALABILITY

Proprietary systems are heavily dependent on the stability of their vendors. If a vendor is struggling, its customers may be affected. These systems also use software with limited scalability and typically cannot adapt to constantly changing business needs. And, as a result of the high cost of upgrading, these systems have limited lifespans.

"Organizations keep using systems for 10 or 15 years that should have been discontinued 3 years after they were built," said Shulman. "It's too much effort to change. But open source technology allows the system to grow with the business as needs change and technologies advance."

With Acuity's platform built on Red Hat's open source solutions, the GSA can easily and instantly scale to meet the demands of more data and perform analysis faster.

IMPROVED SECURITY

Using enterprise-grade open source technology from Red Hat, Acuity's platform improves the GSA's IT security – a primary concern for all government agencies.

“Open source technology is hands down more secure,” said Kennedy. “When a problem is identified, there is a team of people looking at it. When there is a fix, it’s available a lot faster than with a proprietary software solution.”

WORKING TOGETHER TO PROVIDE BETTER SOLUTIONS

Partnering with Red Hat has given Acuity new capabilities and access to the technical expertise to solve any problems it or its customers encounter. In addition, Red Hat helps Acuity provide what the GSA and its customers want: not just products, but solutions to business challenges.

“Red Hat is a professional organization with fantastic customer support, first-rate vendor support, solid products, and advancing technologies. Red Hat makes it easier for me to do my job,” said Shulman. “With Red Hat, we’re a unified team, meeting the customer’s needs. Red Hat is committed to delivering great products, and we’re committed to providing great integration for the customer. We have the same mission, the same goals, and that makes for a very smooth relationship.”

ABOUT ACUITY SYSTEMS

Acuity Systems is a leading solutions provider of cloud-based, big data analytics platforms and applications for the Government, enabling agencies to interpret data of any type from any source. Acuity’s solutions are uniquely architected to help its customers transform Data to Insight to Value. Its analytics platform integrates the latest open source technologies to deliver high performance, scalable and future-proof analytics applications.

ABOUT RED HAT



Red Hat is the world’s leading provider of open source software solutions, using a community-powered approach to provide reliable and high-performing cloud, Linux, middleware, storage, and virtualization technologies. Red Hat also offers award-winning support, training, and consulting services. As a connective hub in a global network of enterprises, partners, and open source communities, Red Hat helps create relevant, innovative technologies that liberate resources for growth and prepare customers for the future of IT.



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NORTH AMERICA
1 888 REDHAT1

EUROPE, MIDDLE EAST,
AND AFRICA
00800 7334 2835
europe@redhat.com

ASIA PACIFIC
+65 6490 4200
apac@redhat.com

LATIN AMERICA
+54 11 4329 7300
info-latam@redhat.com