



## IBM eX5 systems help Acxiom transform IT

*With 5th Generation IBM Enterprise  
X-Architecture*

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### Overview

#### The need

Acxiom is a leader in marketing services and technology, supporting successful marketing campaigns worldwide. IT issues and increasing costs prompted Acxiom to expand its cloud computing environment.

#### The solution

Acxiom implemented the IBM System x3850 X5 Enterprise System with Intel® Xeon® processor 7500 series, exploiting the platform's advanced virtualization workload capabilities.

#### The benefit

The IBM eX5 solution delivers five times the application performance at 15 times less cost, enables a 35:1 virtualization ratio and reduces power consumption by more than a megawatt.

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Founded in 1969, Acxiom is a leader in marketing services and technology that combine consumer data and analytics, databases, data integration, and consulting to enable marketers to successfully reach their audiences. From its headquarters in Little Rock, Arkansas, and offices in the U.S., Europe, Asia-Pacific, the Middle East and South America, Acxiom provides its information management services to the global marketplace. Acxiom is a US\$1.1 billion company with 5,700 clients in 40 countries. It sends 1.5 billion emails a month, supports 17 percent of the postal mailings sent in the United States and counts 350 of the Fortune 500 as its customers.

But according to John Meyer, Acxiom CEO and president, what makes Acxiom different is its ability to make marketing measurable. "It's not something you find every day," he says. "But with Acxiom, it is measurable, it is addressable. Our customers can measure their marketing efforts."

### Supporting worldwide business with massive IT operations

In every way, Acxiom's clients' marketing efforts can be measured. Acxiom's IT infrastructure to do this is massive. The company has operated as many as 23,500 servers concurrently. Its Arkansas data center alone measures 250,000 square feet. This infrastructure conducts 2.5 trillion transactions a month. It handles 12 petabytes of data—a number that doubled in a recent 18-month period and that promises to double again soon. The company maintains over 7,000 databases including marketing services and outsourcing clients and lays claim to one of the largest instance of Oracle software in the world.

"When it comes to computing platforms," explains David Guzmán, senior vice president of information technology and chief information officer for Acxiom, "we have every one there is, every operating system



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—David Guzmán, senior vice president of information technology and chief information officer, Acxiom

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that there is, every size and scale, every age, every generation.” Acxiom runs 12 flavors of Linux® and multiple versions of Microsoft® Windows®.

But even in the early years, Acxiom realized the way to solve its expanding IT needs was not simply to throw more computing power at them. Acxiom was a pioneer in the shared environments that have evolved into today’s cloud computing model. Now its early adoption of shared systems is pointing the way to the future.

### **Transforming the infrastructure with an IBM solution**

Of Acxiom’s 23,500 servers, nearly 10,000 today are used for cloud computing, where the utilization rate is about 70 percent as opposed to single-digit percentage for unvirtualized platforms dedicated to specific customers. The rest are used for dedicated and custom solutions, where the utilization rate is only about two percent. As the size and complexity of the Acxiom environment has grown, those numbers have spoken for themselves. “We knew we had to transform—we knew we had to change,” says CIO Guzmán.

After testing and benchmarking multiple vendors’ solutions, Acxiom found the power to transform in the new IBM eX5 enterprise portfolio, choosing the IBM System x3850 X5. Acxiom had already implemented the full range of IBM server platforms—including IBM System z®, IBM System x® and IBM Power Systems™—and was familiar with the benefits of the System x platform. “System x is the star of the show today,” notes Guzmán. “We like the wide variety of solutions that it gives us, from blades to rack-mounted options, various levels of power and compute, and various levels of memory configuration.”

The fifth generation of IBM Enterprise X-Architecture® helps take System x technology to the next level, meeting needs for enterprise-level virtualization as well as database and transaction processing. Its ability to decouple memory from the processor allows memory to be added without necessarily adding servers. Its design, including the Intel Xeon processor 7500 series, helps ensure exceptional performance that is both scalable and reliable. Created especially for data-intensive applications, the Intel Xeon processor 7500 series is optimized for large-scale virtualization. With more virtual machines per server, the processor helps enhance productivity while reducing the data center footprint.

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### Solution components

- IBM® System x® 3850 X5
  - Intel® Xeon® processor 7500 series
  - IBM System Storage® DS8700
  - IBM System Storage DS5300
  - IBM System Storage San Volume Controller
  - IBM XIV® Storage Systems
  - Linux®
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Acxiom also maintains a large IBM storage infrastructure, including IBM System Storage® DS8700 and DS5300. “We also like the IBM XIV® platform a lot, as well as the System Storage N series, which gives us great flexibility,” says Guzmán. “And we love the SAN Volume Controller, which allows us to manage our storage across multiple tiers, even to competitive storage platforms.”

### A winning solution for Acxiom and its customers

“The combination of IBM’s new eX5 platform and leading Intel technology gave us the opportunity to migrate customers from environments in which they had very big iron, very dedicated, very custom solutions, to a powerful and efficient new platform,” says Guzmán. “As environments come up for refresh, we have benchmarked with some of those customers and found that we could achieve five times the performance with their applications at a cost that’s 15 times less than what it would have taken to refresh their old environment.”

The result has been a winning solution for customers and Acxiom alike. For the customer workload—whether compute-intensive, I/O-intensive, memory-intensive or database-intensive—the eX5 enterprise system delivers the performance required.

For Acxiom, the solution directly addresses the data center’s rapidly growing size and scale. The company anticipates a 35:1 virtualization ratio for some workloads and a 12:1 virtualization ratio for other workloads. The flexibility of the eX5 enterprise system allows Acxiom to provision and de-provision resources based on workload. Its virtualization capabilities simplify maintenance, drive down software licensing and hardware costs, and reduce data center space and energy requirements. The transformation has already yielded a reduction in power requirements of more than a megawatt, with another megawatt of saving expected in the next phase of implementation. “The eX5 gives us a much more green IT environment,” says Guzmán. “Not only is that smarter for the planet, but it’s smarter for business.”

Company CEO Meyer says that working with IBM has also created an atmosphere of positive teamwork. “We put big demands on our technology partners,” he says. “But having a partner like IBM helps us stay focused on satisfying our end customers.”

## For more information

Contact your IBM sales representative or IBM Business Partner. Visit us at: [ibm.com/systems/x](http://ibm.com/systems/x)

For more information about Acxiom, visit: [www.acxiom.com](http://www.acxiom.com)



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