



## Case Study: Farm Bureau—Western Computer Services

Building a service-based architecture

### Business Value

- Dynamic server provisioning and deployment
- 100% uptime
- Cost-effective high availability for every application
- Simple, verifiable disaster recovery
- Reduced administrative expenses

### Executive Summary

Western Computer Services, Inc. (WCS), a wholly owned subsidiary of Farm Bureau Financial Services (FBFS), has deployed the Egenera® BladeFrame® system as the foundation for its new service-based architecture, serving multiple Farm Bureau Financial Services companies throughout the United States. After an extensive evaluation spanning some of the industry's largest systems companies, Farm Bureau-WCS chose Egenera to power the delivery and management of Web-based insurance services to thousands of personal and commercial insurance customers.

### Business Challenge

FBL Financial Group, Inc., through its subsidiary Farm Bureau Financial Services, engages in underwriting, marketing and distributing life insurance, annuities, and mutual funds to individuals and corporations in the Midwestern and Western sections of the United States. Farm Bureau Financial Services has nearly 2,200 employees and 1,900 agents throughout 15 states.

As a wholly owned subsidiary and key service provider to FBFS, WCS provides application solutions including deployment, management and support for a growing list of FBFS entities. WCS' primary charter was to help move Farm Bureau to a service-based architecture, providing Web-based, real-time data for insurance processing for both commercial and individual claims.

Farm Bureau-WCS needed a solution with verifiable disaster recovery, guaranteed uptime and the critical ability to scale up and down quickly as new customers are added and new claims initiated, particularly during peak processing.

After an exhaustive review, Farm Bureau-WCS chose the Egenera system over competitive solutions, including the IBM BladeCenter®, for its inherent availability, agility and flexibility, and the unparalleled ability to support the web-based delivery of mission-critical insurance applications over a standard architecture.

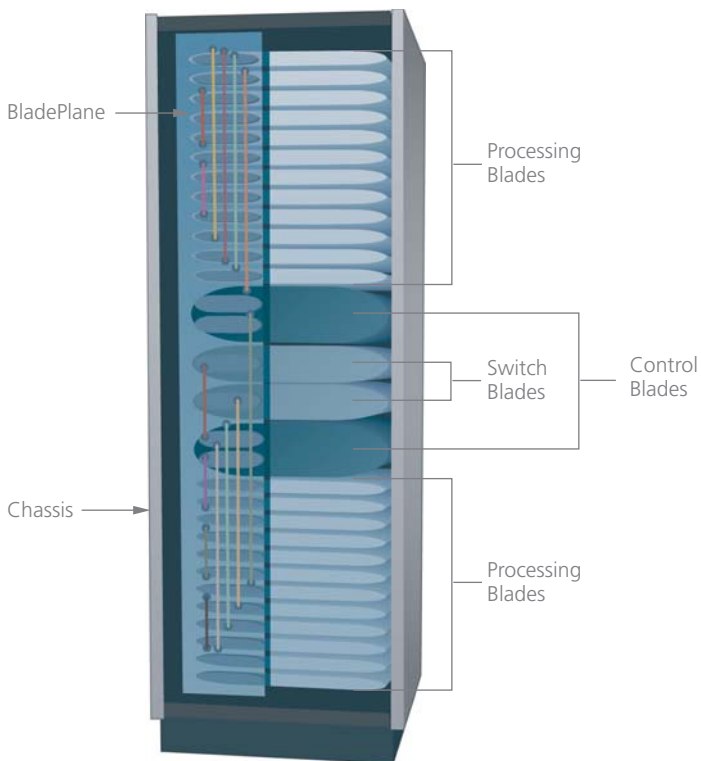
Based on past experiences, James Crum, Manager of Infrastructure Technology Services at Farm Bureau-WCS knew that a legacy approach to supporting this new service-based paradigm wouldn't work. "I came to Farm Bureau-WCS from a UNIX background. I didn't get half the functionality that Egenera provides for the cost."

Farm Bureau-WCS currently deploys a mix of Microsoft Windows® and Linux® applications on AMD-based Egenera Processing Blade™ modules.

*"Based on what we've seen and experienced with Egenera—from technical capabilities to customer service and TCO—there was no reason to consider anything else."*

*James Crum  
Manager, Infrastructure Technology  
Services at Farm Bureau-Western  
Computer Services, Inc.*

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**Egenera BladeFrame System: Rear-view Schematic**

*“With Egenera—in concert with 3PAR® storage—we were able to literally push a button and everything was up and running again. The speed that we now have to get customers back online again is amazing.”*

*James Crum  
Manager, Infrastructure Technology Services  
at Farm Bureau-Western Computer Services, Inc.*

### Egenera Benefits

- **Lower TCO:** Farm Bureau-WCS needs only three administrators to manage the new Egenera-powered Web-based applications that serve thousands of commercial and individual customers. According to Crum, “minimal effort is required after deployment.”
- **Slashed Application Time-to-Market:** In a fast-paced market, getting new products out to customers is critical. Egenera dramatically reduces the amount of time it takes Farm Bureau-WCS to deploy new applications.
- **Assured High Availability:** With Egenera, Farm Bureau-WCS is able to cost-effectively make every application highly available, eliminating the need for dedicated “standby” servers. Instead, Egenera makes use of a failover pool, available to multiple applications 24x7x365.
- **Adjustable Scalability:** Egenera’s data center virtualization architecture increases server utilization. Instead of dedicating static servers to applications, services are dynamically provisioned from a pool of resources. Applications can easily be scaled up to meet demand or scaled down to optimize utilization.
- **Verifiable Disaster Recovery:** A single Egenera system can store configuration information for other Egenera systems. In an emergency, the backup system takes over for any primary system in literally minutes. The backup system need not have the same processing resources as the primary system, and can be used for less critical applications between emergencies to boost utilization and minimize costs.

### Focus on Disaster Recovery

Egenera’s pioneering disaster recovery (DR) technology simplifies and accelerates moving entire clusters of servers, including their storage and networking connections, to a remote site. Leveraging Egenera’s Processing Area Network (PAN) architecture, clusters are reinstated within minutes at the new site, without hardware configuration. A single back-up site can adopt the configuration of any number of primary sites on-demand. This unique N+1 approach provides complete and automatic DR at the lowest cost, without the physical and management complexities typical of physical replication approaches.

James Crum concurred, “During one of our DR tests with Egenera, we had the application up and running again in three minutes. I’ve had experiences where even under planned power downs we would build-in two to three weeks to failover complex, legacy systems—and the actual move would have taken seven hours.

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Currently, Farm Bureau-WCS uses application high availability, which allows them to consolidate multiple applications onto a single pServer (server instance), but gives them the flexibility to rapidly scale out the application architecture as they grow by a few clicks in Egenera® PAN Manager™ software.

### **Leveraging Egenera Professional Services**

A key to Farm Bureau-WCS' success has been the involvement of Egenera Professional Services. Egenera Professional Services offers a complete suite of high-value consulting and knowledge services designed to help clients realize the technical, business, financial and time-to-market advantages of the Egenera architecture.

"In my experience with other vendors' professional service organizations, their primary goal seemed to be focused on making us more dependent on them for future projects – get in, fix the issue and get out with no real knowledge transfer," said Crum. "With Egenera, their goal isn't to make us dependent on them; it's to make us better."

Farm Bureau-WCS has engaged Egenera Professional Services to deliver the Utility Accelerator and DR Accelerator service offerings. The Utility Accelerator optimizes the configuration of applications onto the Egenera system to take advantage of its inherent virtualization capabilities, while the DR Accelerator deploys a documented, tested and 100% repeatable DR solution that reduces downtime to minutes and streamlines DR processes.

### **Future Initiatives**

Going forward, Farm Bureau-WCS aims to take advantage of new software technologies from Egenera including Egenera® vBlade™ software, which will further the trend towards doing more with less, keeping costs down and improving Service Level Agreements (SLAs).

"We're looking at running more applications on less hardware. That's what we expect vBlade software to do for us," confirmed Crum.

Egenera vBlade software gives customers the ability to take advantage of the same levels of high availability, N+1 failover, disaster recovery, dynamic repurposing and other critical services built into the Egenera architecture for both virtual and physical resources. Whether a customer is consolidating hundreds of servers onto virtual blades or deploying the most mission-critical applications on physical blades, Egenera is the first to eliminate both the management complexity and physical complexity plaguing enterprise data centers today, by providing a solution built to deliver agility and simplicity.

Farm Bureau-WCS will continue to roll-out new applications to additional Farm Bureau entities over time.

### **About FBL Financial Group, Inc.**

FBL Financial Group, headquartered in West Des Moines, Iowa, is a holding company whose primary operating subsidiaries are Farm Bureau Life Insurance Company and EquiTrust Life Insurance Company. FBL currently underwrites, markets and distributes life insurance, annuities and mutual funds to individuals and small businesses. In addition, FBL manages all aspects of three Farm Bureau affiliated property-casualty insurance companies for a management fee. FBL Financial Group, Inc. is traded on the New York Stock Exchange under the symbol FFG.



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