IRSAP
Boosting business agility to keep pace with the latest home décor trends.

Designer radiator manufacturer IRSAP selects the Lenovo ThinkAgile HX platform, powered by 2nd Gen Intel® Xeon® Scalable processors and Nutanix Enterprise Cloud software, to support its new SAP HANA environment—accelerating key production planning workloads and empowering the group to react fast to market trends.

The IRSAP Group is a market- leading, family-owned, Italian business and a core protagonist in the European heating and ventilation sectors. Founded in 1963 in Rovigo, Italy, IRSAP achieves worldwide sales of ca. €110 million in over 60 countries and employs more than 1,000 people. The group operates two manufacturing sites for designer radiators and towel rails: Arquà Polesine (Rovigo, Italy) and Cluj Napoca (Romania), spanning ca. 500,000 m² of automated and manned production facilities.

Combining both manufacturing heritage and collaborations with prestigious design studios and universities, IRSAP customers can be confident of high levels of service and product excellence.

With over 50 years of experience, continuous research into new technologies and the development of new products, IRSAP offers products that are design focused, energy efficient and environmentally conscious.

IRSAP's R&D is focused on creating more energy-efficient, sustainable products that meet the latest green building standards. Sustainability is a key concern for the group. Today, about 70% of production plants meet their electrical needs with renewable sources, with annual savings in carbon dioxide emissions of about 5 million kilograms.

Adapting to customer demand

Over the decades, IRSAP has continuously expanded its product range to give customers greater choice.

Marco Monesi, CFO at IRSAP, begins: "We offer a huge array of styles, sizes and colorways, with millions of potential product combinations. Every year, customers can choose from 100,000 different inventory items [SKUs], enabling us to provide every customer with a bespoke solution that perfectly meets their needs."

Manufacturing such a highly customizable range of products is extremely complex. As such, IRSAP requires crystal-clear insight into every aspect of its operations—from the procurement of raw materials to production capacity to logistics and finance. For many years, the group had relied on SAP ERP business systems running on legacy IT infrastructure. But with the size and complexity of its product range growing all the time, response times for critical functions had slowed significantly.
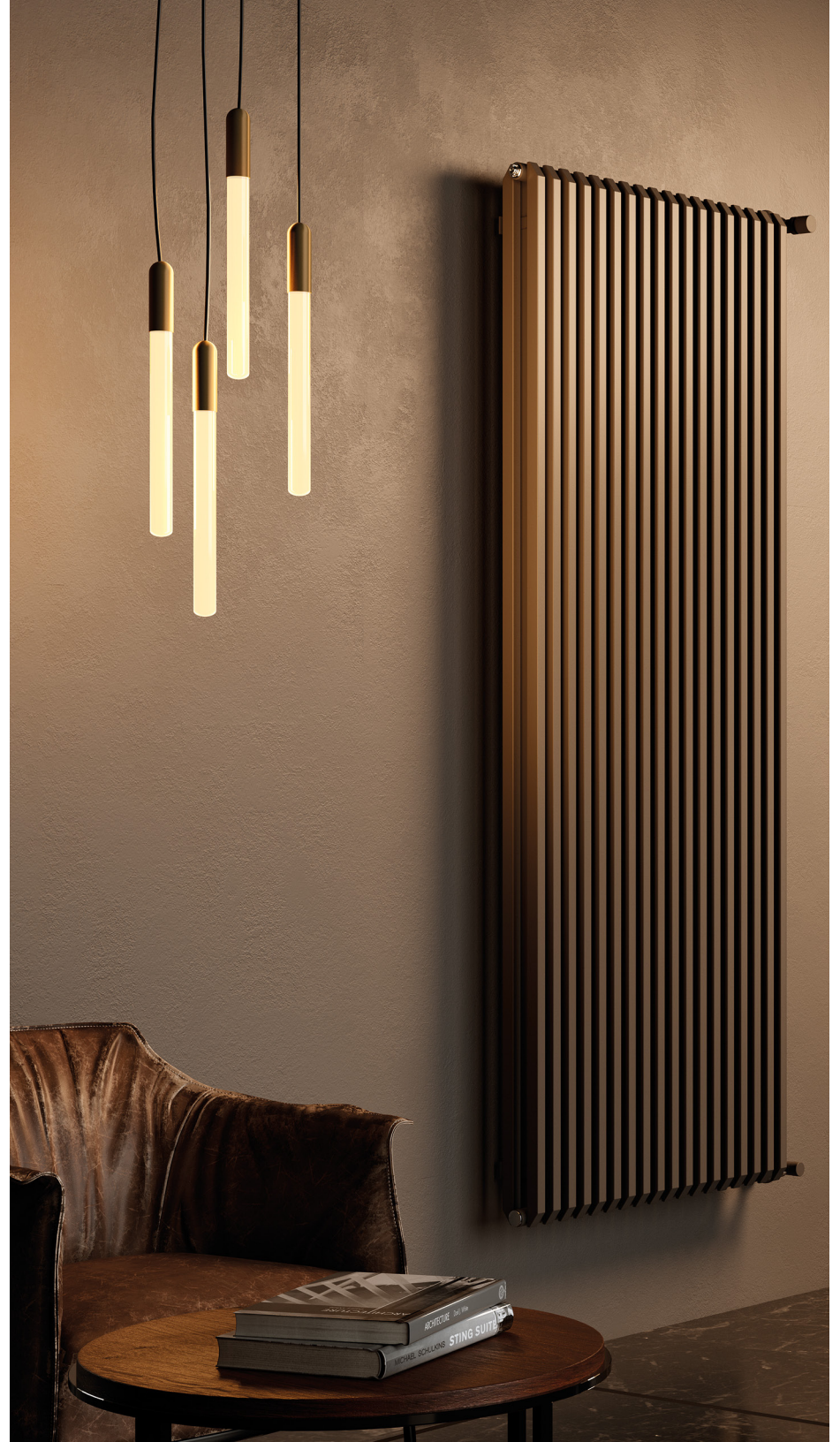
Monesi recalls: "As the size of our master product registry increased, it took longer and longer to update. This had a knock-on effect on materials and production planning, as employees had to wait for updates to finish before they could analyze stock and inventory requirements. This delay threatened to impact manufacturing operations, which in turn could compromise delivery schedules and customer service."

To accelerate production planning and manufacturing processes, IRSAP knew it needed to modernize both its business applications and its IT infrastructure. Monesi confirms: "We knew we had to make a change and saw an opportunity to solve the challenge by upgrading to SAP HANA."

Stepping off the beaten path

To move its mission-critical SAP ERP applications to SAP HANA, IRSAP looked for a reliable, scalable, high-performance hardware platform to replace its legacy infrastructure. The group turned to trusted IT partner Estecom srl, a subsidiary of Eurosystem SpA, for help.

"We looked at traditional three-tier architecture solutions from several vendors, but it was the hyperconverged infrastructure proposal from Lenovo that really caught our attention," says Monesi. "We were impressed by the simplified management and scalability the Lenovo ThinkAgile HX Series hyperconverged solution offered, but we were somewhat apprehensive at first about moving away from the three-tier infrastructure we knew so well. Estecom and Eurosystem demonstrated that hyperconverged infrastructure was a proven technology, and that there was nothing at all for us to worry about."

The Lenovo ThinkAgile HX Solution for SAP HANA, powered by Intel® Xeon® Scalable processors and Nutanix Enterprise Cloud software, was developed in collaboration with SAP and specifically engineered and optimized for SAP HANA workloads in hyperconverged clusters. The Intel® Xeon® Scalable processors support high main-memory capacities—crucial for running SAP HANA workloads, as the platform keeps all data in-memory—and boast an increase in in core-count over previous generations of Intel® Xeon® processors. IRSAP found that the Lenovo ThinkAgile HX solution delivers up to a 50% performance boost over IRSAP's legacy infrastructure.[1] The HCI consolidates storage and compute into a single virtual pool with a simple management interface.

Monesi comments: "We have worked with Estecom for many years. The team knows our IT landscape very well, and we trust their advice and expertise.

"Estecom showed us that a hyperconverged infrastructure offers much greater flexibility than traditional data center setups, which enables us to react to business demands in a more agile manner. Their conviction sealed the deal for us."

Nicola Bosello, Eurosystem & Estecom Sales Director and Chairman, says: "IRSAP has always considered information technology a strategic asset for business growth and was looking for a solution to achieve it. Our aim is to help our customers make their businesses stronger and faster with simple, convenient and flexible IT. This means we not only have to respond to traditional requests but also think about how technology can innovate customers' businesses and give them more flexibility than they could imagine. The Lenovo ThinkAgile HX Solution for SAP HANA, powered by Intel® Xeon® Scalable processors and Nutanix Enterprise Cloud software, was the right solution to increase IRSAP's business agility and to turn our teamwork with Lenovo into great results for the customer. And this is exactly what has happened."

Lenovo and Estecom worked closely to design a solution that met IRSAP's technical requirements. Next, IRSAP implemented a three-node ThinkAgile HX cluster as the foundation for its new SAP HANA environment, which consists of production, quality assurance and development systems, each with 1 TB of memory.

IRSAP also worked with Estecom to deploy an additional three-node ThinkAgile HX cluster, based on Lenovo ThinkAgile HX5521 Certified Nodes with 2nd Gen Intel® Xeon® Scalable processors, to run non-SAP workloads. This cluster uses the VMware vSphere hypervisor and supports the group's file, FTP and web servers, document archive, domain controller, Microsoft SQL Server and MySQL Server environments, and HR system.

In total, IRSAP runs 80 virtual machines across the six physical ThinkAgile HX nodes. All compute and storage resources are managed via a single pane of glass using the Nutanix Prism tool, and IRSAP takes advantage of Lenovo XClarity to monitor and manage the hardware.

Why Lenovo? High-performance hyperconverged infrastructure

Today, IRSAP counts on SAP HANA on Lenovo ThinkAgile HX to support mission-critical ERP workloads for 350 users across the business. Equipped with 2nd Gen Intel® Xeon® Scalable processors, the new platform has supercharged performance for many key workloads. For example, materials requirements planning processes can now be run in half the time.

"Cutting the time taken to complete planning process in half helps our teams to work more efficiently and ensure we always have the right materials at the right time to meet customer demand," says Monesi. "Since migrating SAP ERP to the SAP HANA platform on Lenovo HCI, batch processing jobs are 50% faster on average.[2] Thanks to the Intel® Xeon® Scalable processors, end-user application performance has also improved by 33%[3], empowering employees to work more productively."

[2] 50% performance increase estimate based on the average time taken to complete one SAP job—from 16,000 seconds in the past to 8,000 based on upgrade to the Lenovo ThinkAgile HX hyperconverged infrastructure with 2nd Gen Intel® Xeon® Scalable processors.
[3] 33% performance increase estimate based on average transaction time of 30 seconds in the past to 20 seconds with the new system.

The flexibility and easy scalability of the ThinkAgile HX solution is another plus point for IRSAP, equipping the group with unprecedented business agility.

Monesi states: "Décor trends and customer tastes are constantly evolving. We must continuously expand our product range and production capacity to keep up. With the Lenovo ThinkAgile HX solution, we can easily scale to accommodate new business demands and react fast to market conditions—increasing compute or storage capacity is as quick and simple as adding a new node to the cluster. This will help us to satisfy customer demand for the latest trends and remain at the leading edge of the designer radiator market."

Looking to the future, IRSAP plans to move to SAP S/4HANA to further enhance operations. "The Lenovo hyperconverged infrastructure gives us the ideal foundation on which to build our SAP S/4HANA environment," notes Monesi. "For example, the Lenovo ThinkAgile HX solution delivers the performance levels required to support compute-intensive real-time analytics workloads, which will support faster decision-making. This is especially important for us, as home décor trends go in and out of fashion very quickly."

He concludes: "We were the first company in Italy to run SAP HANA on hyperconverged infrastructure. Our decision to do things differently has certainly paid off. The Lenovo ThinkAgile HX solution has proven to be reliable, flexible and performant—exactly what we need to support our most critical business applications and keep pace with customer demand for the latest design trends."

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– Marco Monesi, CFO, IRSAP

About Estecom and Eurosystem

Estecom srl is an IT company born in Ferrara, Italy, and specialized in designing and implementing information systems for public and private companies who need to build or improve their IT infrastructures, integrating them with high-tech services and solutions. The company is made up of a team of experts who offer technical support, advice and daily help to simplify, speed up and improve companies' performances through information technology. In July 2018, Estecom merged with Eurosystem SpA, an IT consulting firm founded in Treviso 40 years ago specializing in IT solutions for digital transformation and Industry 4.0.

Eurosystem SpA leads companies to cultural and technological change, developing IT projects to support business growth. The company operates in northern and central Italy with six sites (Treviso, Bergamo, Bologna, Udine, Ferrara, Florence), 150 professionals and more than 1,300 customers. Nowadays, Eurosystem is a group of specialized companies that aims to guarantee an excellent offer for the digital transformation and Industry 4.0: enterprise management systems, software for business analytics and smart factories, cybersecurity and data center solutions, managed and data center services. In addition to Estecom, the Eurosystem group includes the companies Nordest Servizi srl, SDTeam srl and securbee srl.

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– Nicola Bosello, Sales Director and Chairman, Eurosystem & Estecom

Lenovo and Intel together are powering the future of enterprise compute to accelerate customer transformation. From edge and AI to HPC and hybrid cloud, Lenovo innovates quickly to deliver the very latest Intel technologies—compute, networking, memory—at the speed of today's data-centered businesses. Your enterprise can rely on Lenovo and Intel as trusted technology partners to deliver the game-changing solutions of today and tomorrow.

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