

BETFAIR PLACES ITS ODDS ON DELL

Leading betting company sees performance gains of approximately 20 per cent with Windows 7 implementation from Dell



Behind every website lies a network of transactions, technologies and support mechanisms. For a company that generates all its income online, the IT infrastructure underpinning these elements must be robust.

SOLUTIONS:

- CLIENT - SECURITY
- GREEN IT
- MIGRATION
- MOBILITY



CUSTOMER PROFILE

COMPANY: Betfair

INDUSTRY: Retail

COUNTRY: United Kingdom

FOUNDED: 2000

EMPLOYEES: 1,200 United Kingdom,
1,700 globally

WEBSITE: www.betfair.com

CHALLENGE

Betfair has a forward-thinking approach to IT, striving to optimise performance, manageability and efficiency. While its existing platforms ran well, Betfair recognised that a refresh would deliver operational and end-user benefits.

SOLUTION

The company worked with Dell and Microsoft to migrate to Windows Server® 2008 R2 and Windows® 7, alongside upgrades for existing Dell™ PowerEdge™ servers, Dell Latitude™ laptops and Dell OptiPlex™ desktops.

BENEFITS

Get IT Faster

- Support from Dell and Microsoft enables seamless migration
- Dell/Microsoft relationship ensures prompt access to expertise

Run IT Better

- Compute power per watt is increased
- Performance increases by up to 20 per cent
- BitLocker™ improves security
- Intel® vPro™ technology simplifies patch distribution

Grow IT Smarter

- Dell provides prompt access to emerging technologies



As owner of the world's biggest betting community, Betfair processes six million transactions a day – more than the combined total of the European stock markets. Every element of the business directly or indirectly supports the Betfair website, through software development, customer services, accounts and functions – such as the IT helpdesk – that help staff work effectively.

Everyone who works at Betfair needs an IT infrastructure that's highly available and stable. A robust framework is also crucial to keep the website running smoothly 24/7. Ian Burgess, head of Microsoft and datacentre platforms at Betfair, says: "We're pushing the boundaries with the number of transactions we're processing through our website. Our IT environment has to be reliable."

What's more, the 10-strong, UK-based desktop team supports 1,500 users, and needs time to develop new services alongside issue resolution. The more reliable the infrastructure, the freer they are to innovate.

Since it was founded in 2000, Betfair has used Dell technology, including servers,

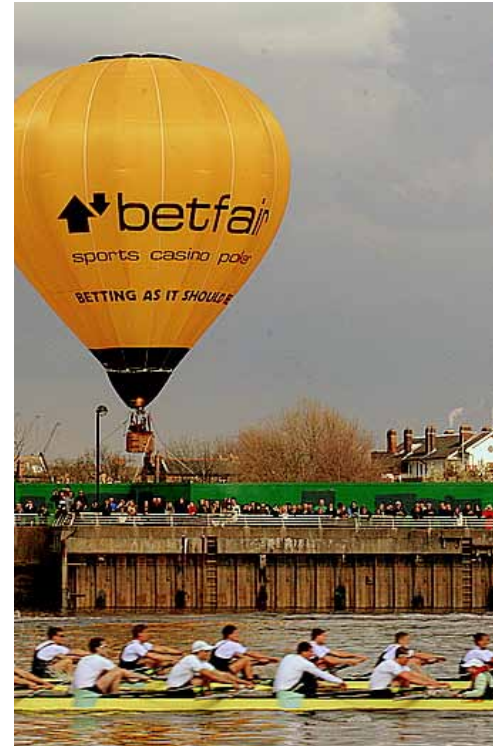
laptops and desktops. Burgess and his team have also taken maximum advantage of Dell's long-standing relationship with Microsoft, and the access to Microsoft Technology Adoption Programmes (TAPs) it affords.

"Technology drives our business. Our partnership with Dell gives us the opportunity to enhance our IT infrastructure and improve operations by deploying emerging Microsoft technologies. The network of expertise we can access through Dell is invaluable," says Burgess. When Microsoft released Beta versions of Windows® 7 and Windows Server® 2008 R2 Enterprise, the IT team saw an opportunity to improve application performance, enhance security and energy efficiency, and simplify maintenance.

FIRST-HAND INSIGHT AND BROAD EXPERTISE

Betfair has offices around the world, including the US, Malta, Italy, Romania and Australia. Burgess and the desktop support team took responsibility for the initial migration in the UK, which would create a blueprint for the global business. "Moving to Windows 7 and Windows Server 2008

R2 was a considerable undertaking from an operational perspective. But, we were confident that the benefits would improve our business, and that the combined input of Dell and Microsoft would make the project a success," says Burgess.



"WE HAVE A LIST OF TICKETS IN OUR SUPPORT SYSTEM FROM PEOPLE REQUESTING WINDOWS 7. IT'S FASTER, EASIER TO USE AND HAS LOTS OF FEATURES THAT, IN COMBINATION, PRODUCE A MORE POLISHED, SEAMLESS USER EXPERIENCE."

Ian Burgess, head of Microsoft and datacentre platforms, Betfair

HOW IT WORKS

SERVICES

- Dell ProConsult
- Dell ProSupport for IT
 - Mission Critical option
 - Next Business Day On-site Service

HARDWARE

- Dell™ PowerEdge™ R610 server with Intel® Xeon® Processors E5502
- Dell Latitude™ E4300 and E6400 laptops with Intel Core™ 2 Duo Processors and Intel vPro technology
- Dell OptiPlex™ 960 desktops with Intel Core 2 Quad Processors and Intel vPro™ technology

SOFTWARE

- Windows® 7
- Windows Server® 2008 R2 Enterprise
- Microsoft® Exchange Server 2010
- Microsoft Office 2010 Professional
- Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager 2007

Dell arranged for Betfair to attend the Windows 7 airlift at Microsoft in Seattle, which gave the team a chance to network with Microsoft engineers, give feedback on the software, and discuss concerns and queries. "It's not just about gaining access to technology through Dell, but to people," Burgess explains. "The opportunity to discuss Windows 7 with Microsoft developers in person was invaluable. We also looked at Microsoft roadmaps, which will help us develop our strategies for the Betfair environment."

Burgess and his team decided to install Windows Server 2008 R2 on existing Dell servers as a pilot, before upgrading the servers to maximise the potential of the software and optimise infrastructure performance and efficiency. Burgess says: "Dell launched the Dell PowerEdge R610

servers around the time we were looking at Windows Server 2008 R2. It was clear that by upgrading hardware and software simultaneously we would enhance the benefits of each – particularly from an energy perspective."

Similarly, the client estate at Betfair will soon consist of Dell™ Latitude™ E4300 and E6400 laptops with Intel® Core™ 2 Duo Processors, and Dell OptiPlex™ 960 desktops with Intel Core 2 Quad Processors. All feature Intel vPro™ technology. "We're gradually refreshing our client infrastructure alongside the migration, but Windows 7 will also run effectively on our existing Dell OptiPlex 620 and 760 desktops, so we can keep them until they reach the end of their lifecycles and won't lose our return on investment," Burgess says.

“WITH INTEL VPRO, WE CAN REMOTELY POWER UP DESKTOPS AND LAPTOPS THAT ARE SWITCHED OFF OVERNIGHT AND DISTRIBUTE PATCHES TO EVERY MACHINE, RATHER THAN MISSING OUT THOSE THAT ARE TURNED OFF. THIS WILL SAVE TIME AND HELP US DELIVER A SECURE, CONSISTENT EXPERIENCE FOR END USERS.”

Ian Burgess, head of Microsoft and datacentre platforms, Betfair

To ensure maximum uptime, Betfair chose Dell ProSupport for IT, Mission Critical option, with a guaranteed four-hour on-site response for servers. For client solutions, the team opted for Next Business Day On-site Service.

SEAMLESS DEPLOYMENT

The Dell Global Infrastructure Consulting team (ProConsult), worked with Microsoft to deliver workshops to test features such as BitLocker™, before deciding which Windows 7 features to focus on during the first phase of the migration. The IT team then rolled out the solution to 40 key employees from each business division, so that they could assess performance in relation to the requirements of different end users.

End users responded positively, so the team migrated a further 150 staff. Initially, they used the Microsoft® Desktop Deployment Tool, but have now moved to automated migration with Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager 2007. Each migration took approximately 40 minutes, including migration of users' files and settings. “Microsoft System Center Configuration Manager 2007 allows us to upgrade any laptop or desktop in 40 minutes, whether it's running Windows XP, Windows Vista or a release candidate of Windows 7,” says Burgess. Simultaneously, Betfair worked with Dell to install 120 Dell™ PowerEdge™ R610 servers with Intel Xeon® Processors E5502 running Windows Server 2008 R2.

“The deployment and migration process went perfectly. Whenever we needed information or had an issue, Dell consultants responded within 24 hours with a resolution – whether that was a code, a driver, an answer from a Microsoft expert or the name of a Microsoft programme manager who we could go to for help,” says Burgess. “That's the beauty of partnering with Dell. Having both Dell and Microsoft behind us is what made our Windows 7 deployment work.” Eighty per cent of Betfair's staff in Europe will be using Windows 7 within the next month.

END USERS REQUEST WINDOWS 7

Burgess and his team are developing a plan to launch features such as DirectAccess, BranchCache™ and AppLocker™. But even without these, the response from end users has been unequivocal. Burgess says: “We have a list of tickets in our support system from people requesting Windows 7. It's faster, easier to use and has lots of features that, in combination, produce a more polished, seamless user experience.”

PERFORMANCE IMPROVES BY AROUND 20 PER CENT

The Betfair IT team took a standard workflow and replicated it across various operating systems running on Dell laptops and desktops. “Our benchmarking tests revealed an improvement in performance of up to 20 per cent when running a workflow using Windows 7. We're also seeing 10 per cent fewer incidents, quicker application launch and faster completion of core tasks within applications,” says Burgess.

This improved performance will boost staff productivity, as well as increase the time the IT team has for value-added work. “With Windows 7, we'll have higher availability for end users, and we'll save time on issue resolution,” Burgess says. “In turn, we'll have more time to spend on strategic work to further enhance the tools available to Betfair staff.”

ENERGY EFFICIENCY IMPROVED WITH WINDOWS 7, DELL AND INTEL

With Dell Energy Smart servers, laptops and desktops, and upgraded software, Betfair has significantly reduced energy consumption. For example, Windows Server 2008 R2 takes advantage of the energy-saving features of Dell PowerEdge and Intel technology.

Burgess says: “We have a strong green agenda at Betfair. In some of our datacentres, we have a fixed limit on the energy we can use for each rack, so we need to make the

most of our power. With the Intel-based Dell PowerEdge R610 server, we have eight times the performance per watt compared with our previous PowerEdge servers. Alongside this, the Core Parking capabilities of Windows Server 2008 R2 and Windows 7 will shut down cores during periods of low utilisation, so servers, laptops and desktops consume only the power they need.”

Betfair has been running Hyper-V™ for many months to achieve efficiency and manageability, and now the upgrade has consolidated the virtual environment and will produce additional savings. Burgess says: “One of our Hyper-V clusters has four nodes with capacity to spare, whereas before there were seven nodes at full capacity. That equates to a massive energy saving across our datacentres. We've achieved this through the combined features of the PowerEdge R610 servers, and Windows Server 2008 R2.”

The Dell Latitude laptops and OptiPlex 960 desktops also support Betfair's green goals. They all meet the US Environmental Protection Agency's Energy Star 5.0 rating, and the OptiPlex 960 can reduce power consumption by 43 per cent compared with the previous generation of OptiPlex desktops*.

LIVE MIGRATION SIMPLIFIES MANAGEMENT AND RAISES AVAILABILITY

“In terms of Hyper-V, the ability to perform live migrations is priceless. In the past, we had to migrate virtual machines onto another node to patch servers. Now, we can complete the process without taking virtual machines offline. This has improved uptime significantly and avoids the need for scheduled downtime outside office hours,” says Burgess.

* <http://content.dell.com/us/en/corp/d/press-releases/2009-07-27-client-energy-efficiency.aspx>

“WITH WINDOWS 7 WE HAVE ENHANCED DESKTOP AND LAPTOP SECURITY BY USING THE BUILT-IN DISK ENCRYPTION, ELIMINATING THE COST AND MANAGEMENT OVERHEAD OF A THIRD-PARTY SOLUTION.”

Ian Burgess, head of Microsoft and datacentre platforms, Betfair

The patching process for desktops and laptops is also simpler thanks to Intel vPro technology. Burgess says: “With Intel vPro, we can remotely power up desktops and laptops that are switched off overnight and distribute patches to every machine, rather than missing out those that are turned off. This will save time and help us deliver a secure, consistent experience for end users.”

DirectAccess will also improve manageability by giving Burgess and his team remote visibility of all laptops and desktops on the company network. “With DirectAccess, end users will save time because they won’t have to bring their laptops to us for repairs. For us, it will increase visibility and control and simplify maintenance,” says Burgess.

WINDOWS 7 IMPROVES SECURITY

Previously, Betfair had little option but to give admin rights to end users so that they could run line-of-business applications. Windows 7 has allowed users to continue to do their jobs without the need for admin rights. Burgess says: “Windows 7 has solved a big security issue for us. We can roll out laptops and desktops without admin rights, but staff can still install software according to defined specifications.”

The team is also using disk encryption for all desktops and laptops, because security is a top priority at Betfair. Burgess says: “With Windows 7 we have enhanced desktop and laptop security by using the built-in disk encryption, eliminating the cost and management overhead of a third-party solution.”

Betfair has also worked with Dell to migrate to Microsoft Exchange Server 2010 and Microsoft Office 2010 Professional. Says Burgess: “By working with Dell and Microsoft to implement emerging technology, we know that we’re making the most of our investments, supported by expertise that complements our own.”

For more information on this case study or to read additional case studies, go to www.dell.com/casestudies and www.dell.co.uk

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