

GREAT COMMUNICATION DELIVERS EXCELLENT RESULTS

Major UK media agency reclaims 96 full-time equivalent days of IT management time per year and reduces power consumption by up to 70 per cent with Dell



As IT infrastructures become more complex, companies are spending more time tactically managing IT assets than leveraging technology for strategic initiatives. The challenge for businesses is to cut management time and free up IT administrators for higher value strategic tasks. This isn't easy. However, the task is certainly made less painful by choosing the right IT solutions provider, which can provide targeted consulting services. By using these services, companies can identify specific pain points quickly and gain the right equipment to deliver simplified IT infrastructure on time and within budget.

SOLUTIONS:

- BACKUP, RECOVERY AND ARCHIVING
- DATA MANAGEMENT AND CONSOLIDATION
- GREEN IT
- VIRTUALIZATION



CUSTOMER PROFILE

COMPANY: John Brown Media
INDUSTRY: Arts, Entertainment & Media
COUNTRY: United Kingdom
FOUNDED: 1988
EMPLOYEES: 300
WEBSITE: www.johnbrownmedia.com

CHALLENGE

IT personnel at John Brown spent too much time managing infrastructure issues. The organisation was experiencing explosive data growth and low server utilisation. Launching development environments was time consuming.

SOLUTION

Dell Consulting Services helped assess, design and implement a virtualized environment with optimised storage. The infrastructure featured Dell servers and storage, automating manual processes and incorporating industry best practices.

BENEFITS

Get IT Faster

- Up to 155 working days saved by choosing Dell consultants to deliver infrastructure assessment

Run IT Better

- New automated system reduces storage administration by 70 per cent
- Backup windows are cut by 50 per cent
- Power consumption reduced by up to 70 per cent
- Server numbers consolidated from 28 to 12

Grow IT Smarter

- Scalable environment can match business needs cost effectively
- Administrators have more time to focus on high-value projects



John Brown Media, based in London, is a leading media agency offering a broad range of marketing services covering areas such as customer magazines, websites, and brand messaging. The company has grown significantly in recent times, following the acquisition of other communication businesses in the market. Despite the challenge of integrating the acquired organisations within its own culture, John Brown has delivered a consistently high-quality product across all areas of the business, maintaining the level of service that brought initial success.

When it came to integrating the IT infrastructure of a new business, John Brown operated a 'lift and shift' policy. In short, the company relocated the entire IT infrastructure of the acquired company to the John Brown datacentre. Although this policy worked well when there were only one or two acquisitions, as soon as the figure began to grow the company encountered some challenges. Richard Sacre, IT Director at John Brown Media, says: "We found ourselves with 28 different servers supporting a mixed environment that included Linux® and Microsoft® solutions such as Windows Server™ 2000, 2003, various Microsoft SQL Servers and Microsoft Exchange Server 2003. Data was effectively siloed and the infrastructure was becoming increasingly complex and challenging to control."



MANAGING EXPLOSIVE DATA GROWTH

Combined, the business units within John Brown were creating an ever-increasing amount of data that the IT team was finding difficult to protect. With little storage automation, team members were manually archiving up to 500 gigabytes of data every two weeks to prevent the system overloading. The infrastructure's storage system was never running much below 90 per cent capacity. "It was practically a full-time job managing our storage. At least a couple of times each week, there were two of us from the IT team manually archiving data into the night," remembers Sacre.

Alongside the challenge of storage, the company also faced low rates of server utilisation. The reason for this was that John Brown followed a rule of one application per physical server, a policy encouraged by software vendors. Operating a purely physical IT infrastructure also made it time consuming to launch new machines, affecting the agility of the company. Sacre explains: "We often receive requests for new environments to support business pitches. It wasn't always easy to find a spare server or the physical space to provision a new machine in the datacentre."

"THE DELL STORAGE ENVIRONMENT HAS ALSO HELPED CREATE A BETTER WORK/LIFE BALANCE, BECAUSE IT ADMINISTRATORS NO LONGER WORK OUTSIDE NORMAL OFFICE HOURS MANAGING DATA."

Richard Sacre, IT Director, John Brown Media

As well as having to contend with storage complexity and low utilisation, there was the problem of high-energy consumption. In short, the department was close to hitting its power limits. The only way to access more electricity was by installing its own power generator. For the department, the situation meant they could no longer scale the infrastructure for future demand, seriously affecting the growth of the business. For John Brown, the amount of energy being consumed ran contrary to its position on sustainability. Comments Sacre: "The company's aim is to establish sustainable working practices and conserve energy wherever possible."

DELL CONSULTANTS PROPOSE IT REFRESH PROGRAMME

Even though Sacre and his team were aware of the challenges, they didn't have

the internal resources to produce an in-depth review and plan of action needed to secure funding for an infrastructure refresh. At this point, John Brown began working with Dell Global Infrastructure Consulting Services whose innovative tools and practical plans for simplifying IT infrastructures have helped many companies reduce IT costs and increase performance. Comments Sacre: "We have used Dell technology for a number of years and had Dell PowerEdge servers in the datacentre. The build quality and reliability of Dell technology is second-to-none, and we had no doubts that the work of Dell consultants would be of a similar high quality."

In the case of John Brown, Dell consultants focused on storage optimisation, one of three broad issue-based consulting options, which also include End-User Computing, and Systems Management.

HOW IT WORKS

SERVICES

- Dell Global Infrastructure Consulting Services
- Dell ProSupport for IT – Mission Critical option

HARDWARE

- Dell™ PowerEdge™ 1950 and 2950 servers with Intel® Xeon® Processor 5400
- Dell/EMC CX3-40 storage area network (SAN)
- Dell PowerVault™ ML6000 tape library

SOFTWARE

- CommVault® archive software
- VMware® ESX Server and vCenter™ Server
- EMC Navisphere Management Suite
- EMC PowerPath
- Dell OpenManage™ Systems Management
- Capacity management tools



“THE SERVERS DELIVER EXCELLENT PERFORMANCE AND VALUE BECAUSE OF THEIR INTEL XEON PROCESSOR 5400, WHICH HELP REDUCE ENERGY CONSUMPTION WHILE OFFERING GREAT SUPPORT FOR VIRTUALIZED INFRASTRUCTURES.”

Richard Sacre, IT Director, John Brown Media

They organised a workshop with John Brown to assess the requirements of the engagement. This was quickly followed by an assessment to determine the main challenges. Dell consultants completed the assessment in 40 days, using Dell's measurable rapid insight (MRI) service. As part of the MRI offering, software running on the customer's infrastructure provides a rapid in-depth analysis of the environment. Dell consultants then refine the results, which go into a final report. Working with the consultants saved John Brown a great deal of time and expense. Says Sacre: "We would need up to nine months to complete the work that Dell consultants did in just 40 days."

COMPREHENSIVE IT REPORT BY DELL SERVICES HELPS SECURE FUNDING

The report delivered a number of metrics quantifying the challenges Sacre and his team faced day-to-day. This showed that 80 per cent of file storage could be archived to lower cost tape without affecting user experience, thus improving performance, reducing backup windows and cutting restore times. The document also showed that a few large mail boxes were disrupting the performance of the company's Microsoft Exchange Server 2003 environment and that 65 per cent of mail items were older than 90 days. Dell recommended archiving older emails automatically.

Sacre and Dell delivered the report to the financial director at John Brown. Sacre says: "The assessment report from Dell was comprehensive. However, it was designed so that directors could read it easily and see the benefits of refreshing our IT infrastructure fast." The project received the green light and work immediately began designing and

implementing the new server and storage environment.

Dell consultants produced a detailed design and implementation plan, including testing and validating all components. At the heart of the design are Dell™ PowerEdge™ 1950 and 2950 servers running Intel® Xeon® Processors 5400. Both sets of servers include energy-efficient components to help reduce power and cooling needs. Likewise, they include the Trusted Platform Module (TPM) standard, which ensures information security software and components are physically and logically locked down to prevent unauthorised access.

In the case of John Brown, the Dell PowerEdge 1950 supports VMware® ESX Server virtualization technology. By virtualizing servers, the company can run multiple applications reliably on a single physical machine, boost rates of server utilisation and provision servers dynamically. In addition, with VMware running on the PowerEdge1950s, the company gains outstanding virtualization performance in a 1U server and streamlines deployment.

Storage is provided by a Dell/EMC CX3-40 storage area network (SAN), which delivers an excellent combination of performance and scalability. With 240 drives, the SAN provides a maximum data capacity of up to 119 terabytes. It also supports both fibre channel and low-cost fibre channel drives so administrators can tailor the solution to their requirements. Data storage management is automated by CommVault archive software running on a PowerEdge 2950. To support the SAN, the design included a Dell PowerVault™ ML6000 tape library. This versatile, enterprise-level, top-rated modular library allows customers to scale their SAN backup solution. It automates the retrieval, storage, and management of tape

cartridges and offers a minimum native transfer rate of 120 megabytes per second.

AUTOMATED DATA STORAGE SAVES THE EQUIVALENT OF 96 WORKING DAYS A YEAR

By automating its storage processes, including data backups, Sacre and his team now save around 720 hours a year. In the past, two people were spending 60 hours each month manually archiving data. "Thanks to Dell consultants, we have deployed a scalable environment that's reduced storage administration by 70 per cent and data backup windows by 50 per cent. This saves us about 96 working days a year," says Sacre. The benefits of this saving are twofold. "After Dell helped us automate our data storage systems, IT personnel could focus on higher-value strategic projects instead of spending time manually archiving data," comments the IT director. "The Dell storage environment has also helped create a better work/life balance, because IT administrators no longer work outside normal office hours managing data."

VIRTUALIZED SERVER ENVIRONMENT SAVES AROUND 150 HOURS A YEAR IN MANAGEMENT TIME

On the recommendation of Dell consultants, John Brown deployed VMware virtualization technology. "The involvement of Dell consultants gave us the confidence to deploy virtualization technology," comments Sacre. The complete VMware infrastructure consists of VMware ESX Server, which partitions physical servers in virtual machines, along with VMware vCenter Server, which provisions virtual machines quicker. Currently, the company has 18 virtual servers running on two physical PowerEdge 1950 servers.

The virtual machines support BlackBerry® Enterprise Server software, staging and development environments for Linux and Windows.

As a result of virtualization, John Brown has consolidated the number of physical servers by more than half – from 28 to 12 – and improved utilisation rates dramatically. In addition, the IT team can launch new environments quickly. “By virtualizing our servers using Dell, we save roughly 150 hours a year in launching staging and development environments,” says Sacre. Apart from the management benefits, the system enables the IT team within John Brown to respond faster to new work opportunities. “We can launch an environment in support of a business pitch in less than an hour,” comments the director.

DELL INFRASTRUCTURE REDUCES POWER CONSUMPTION BY UP TO 70 PER CENT

For John Brown, a major advantage of the infrastructure is that it supports green IT. “We have reduced power consumption by up to 70 per cent by following the recommendations of Dell infrastructure services,” says the IT director. “Our air conditioning unit is now running at about 65 per cent capacity when before it was running at 90 per cent.” The reduction in energy consumption is good news for the company and Sacre. “Everyone is increasingly concerned about the planet and it makes a big difference when you feel like you’re doing something to minimise your impact on the environment.”

EXCELLENT MANAGEMENT TOOLS AND SERVER BUILD QUALITY SIMPLIFY OPERATIONS

According to Sacre, the build quality of the Dell PowerEdge 1950s and 2950s is as good as Dell has ever produced. “The PowerEdge servers are totally reliable,” he says. “The servers deliver excellent performance and value because of their Intel Xeon Processor 5400, which help reduce energy consumption

while offering great support for virtualized infrastructures.” He is equally impressed with the performance of the SAN and PowerVault library. “We had experience of using Dell/EMC SANs in the past and never experienced any problems. The newly-installed CX3-40 technology is performing just as well.”

To manage the CX3-40, the IT team is using the same EMC Navisphere Management Suite and EMC PowerPath that it used with a previous Dell/EMC CX200. However, for the PowerEdge servers, the IT team is using Dell OpenManage™ Systems Management for the first time. The solution provides standards-based tools for proactive management throughout the life cycle of a server. Personnel are now using OpenManage to proactively administer the machines, optimising deployment, health status monitoring, fault recovery and change management.

DELL SERVICES DELIVER EXCELLENT CONSULTATION AND GREAT SUPPORT

As part of the implementation, John Brown chose Dell ProSupport for IT, Mission Critical option to protect servers and storage. The service helps Sacre and his team avoid any unplanned downtime or lost productivity and includes a four hour on-site response service for rapid assistance.

Sacre says: “Since we began working with Dell, the support services have been excellent. ProSupport for IT, is the most comprehensive set of services that Dell has ever delivered, and the Mission Critical option helps us meet the needs of our internal customers and frees up time to focus on important strategic tasks.”

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