

Bank of London and the Middle East plc

Improving computer power, resilience
and capacity with Kelway

Bank of London and the Middle East plc

The Bank of London and The Middle East plc ("BLME") launched in the UK on 9 July 2007, having received FSA authorisation to launch as a standalone, wholesale, Sharia'a compliant bank based in the City of London. BLME is focused on four main business lines: Islamic Treasury and Financial Institutions, Corporate Banking, Private Banking and Investment Management, Investment Banking. To ensure that all BLME's services and operations are wholly Sharia'a compliant, BLME has a dedicated Sharia'a Supervisory Board whose role is to review contracts and agreements relating to all of BLME's transactions to ensure they are consistent with the principles of Islamic jurisprudence.

The Challenge

In July 2007, the Bank of London and the Middle East plc ("BLME") launched as a fully Sharia'a compliant wholesale bank, based in the City of London. BLME offers a range of high-quality Sharia'a compliant banking services and advice to businesses both in Europe and the Middle East and Northern Africa region which wish to access innovative Islamic financial products. For the Head of Information Technology, William Purdy, setting up the bank's new IT infrastructure has been a demanding exercise. Banking software is always considered a mission-critical application which requires high-availability hardware from proven vendors. Compliance to stringent Financial Services Authority regulations alongside tight internal auditing control are also essential.

"We needed to have systems that were fit for purpose and demonstrated that control," said Purdy. "It was necessary to identify an application that would give us the right facilities now and well into the future."

Facing tight timescales from the launch date, the bank searched for an off-the-shelf application that supported Islamic banking practices. It quickly found Kuwait-based Path Solutions offered iMAL, an enterprise solution for banking, investment, Islamic financing, and treasury operations. iMAL used the Sybase database which supports high availability systems with failover procedures.

"Once you've identified the application software and database, then that is the main driver for the hardware requirements," said Purdy. "We undertook a sizing exercise to see how capable the system actually needed to be, and then started on the actual hardware selection."

All the technical objectives revolved around system processing power, capacity, reliability, and resilience. Like any new business, the bank based its initial sizing requirements on its plans for growth, allowing plenty of room for easy future expansion. UNIX-based platforms from HP, Sun and IBM soon topped the list for the three servers intended for production, high availability, and disaster recovery.

"We needed hardware which had high performance, good value for money, and a great return on investment. It had to be something we could easily manage in-house too," said Purdy.

The Solution

The bank soon found that IBM offered the "most cost effective solution" based on the total cost of ownership including the initial software outlay. IBM then recommended Kelway, an IBM premier partner, to fulfil the project. Kelway provided installation and configuration work including system definition, sizing, and systems software familiarisation.

IBM P52a clustered servers running AIX were selected to provide the processing power along with SAN storage, network switches, and a tape library. Kelway consultants installed the hardware and the AIX operating system including High Availability Cluster Multi-Processing (HACMP). One of the most important tasks of a well-managed implementation plan was testing the high availability failover routines.

Another key area of the project was security penetration testing, conducted by an independent company. This pinpointed some vulnerabilities associated with open logical ports in the AIX operating system which were then closed by Kelway consultants. Finally, Kelway ensured proper skills transfer and provided a

"very good" configuration document for the final handover.

The bank's new systems went live in July 2007 following the installation by Path Solutions of the iMAL application software and its Sybase database. Running carefully worked-out daily housekeeping tasks will now help ensure the system's future stability with IBM's three-year hardware warranty providing further reassurance. The close-working partnership between IBM, Kelway has delivered a solution that's met all expectations and is ready for the future too.

"There is a great deal of resilience built-in with a lot of contingency from the way the systems and infrastructure has been designed," said Purdy.

London City Office
St Mary's Court
20 St Mary at Hill
London, UK, EC3R 8EE
t +44(0)20 7375 3757
f +44(0)20 7375 1525
e info@kelway.co.uk

London Docklands Office
Building 1000
Dockside Road
London, UK, E16 2QU
t +44(0)20 7055 6055
f +44(0)20 7055 6200
e info@kelway.co.uk

Basingstoke Office
Vertex, Chineham Court
Lutyens Close, Basingstoke
Hampshire, UK, RG24 8AG
t +44(0)1256 697222
f +44(0)1256 697100
e info@kelway.co.uk

United Arab Emirates Office
Business Central Towers
11th Floor, Suite 1106B
Sheikh Zayed Road, Dubai
PO Box 500833, UAE
t +971 4 801 9279
e info@kelway.co.uk



www.kelway.co.uk