

CODA Group

A centre of success

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CODA Group develops and delivers financial management solutions and related services to help medium and large organisations, especially those with complex accounting environments involving multiple currencies and languages, to streamline and automate their finance processes so as to achieve best practice in areas such as compliance, transaction related performance management and cost control.

A global organisation, headquartered in the United Kingdom, CODA is a Unit 4 Agresso company, an international business software developer that employs 3,500 people worldwide and whose turnover exceeds €321 million. With a track record of success with client organisations that approaches thirty years, CODA has also received many industry awards and the latest accreditations for its software solutions.

The Challenge

Kelway has worked with CODA for over eight years, delivering hardware and software maintenance support, installation, technical advice and supply services for HP, IBM, Microsoft and NetApp technologies. In 2007, CODA was experiencing issues relating to the installation of newly acquired technology to support its research and development platform used to test new products before releasing them to market. Kelway and CODA worked together to resolve the problem.

Specifically, CODA was experiencing difficulties testing and developing its Neon software across an Oracle Real Application Cluster (RAC) environment, based on Oracle 10g. A key CODA offering that delivers international accounting functionality and is used by some of its largest clients, Neon is a multi-platform application with the flexibility to work in a range of customer environments. CODA invested £15 million and 300 man years of research, development and testing time to create a highly advanced finance system.

“Kelway’ Proof of Concept Centre has helped us stay on track with our product roadmap as we look to develop and take new products to market.”

Richard Hall, IT Manager - CODA Group

The Opportunity

Due to the increasing standardisation of hardware, CODA identified an opportunity to create savings running into the tens of thousands of pounds. CODA wanted to test and develop Neon using a single clustered Oracle set up, based on industry standard servers able to run a variety of operating systems – rather than multiple bespoke machines running a number of enterprise platforms such as HP-UX – without sacrificing the underlying levels of resilience. In so doing, the IT team would be able to better support CODA's R&D objectives whilst also extend the life of its existing Unix systems, by putting them to use elsewhere.

Although this was a particularly unique combination of technologies, CODA's in-house IT team established that the most likely reason for the performance blip related to the connectivity

between the HP blade hardware and the storage environment, which was preventing the Oracle system from working in a fault tolerant manner. Consequently, CODA's Neon application was not operating satisfactorily either, preventing effective testing and development.

Therefore, the CODA IT team needed to establish if the HP blade hardware had to be replaced – and having established the answer to this, adjust the software configurations to create the desired robust and resilient environment. Moreover, CODA also wanted to be certain that its key application had the flexibility to combine with a wide range of other products likely to be met in a customer's organisation and did not need to be fixed on to one operating system or platform.

The Solution

Kelway was able to offer CODA its Proof of Concept Centre, located at its London City office, with its like-for-like hardware capabilities, plus access to additional technologies including IBM's System I and System P servers and VMware virtualisation solutions. In a discrete and secure environment, where there could be no risk of hardware failure detrimentally impacting CODA's day to day R&D operations, the effectiveness of the Oracle RAC environment combined with a number of platforms and configurations could be put to the test.

Furthermore, Kelway and CODA technicians rebuilt and reset the server and storage hardware, sealing off network traffic to remove the possibility of outside influences. Having resolved the underlying issues and reinstalled the Oracle software on to a replica HP blade server infrastructure, the optimum configurations were established. The Proof of Concept Centre also helped CODA to identify the system's possible points of failure and tolerances, through testing maximum loads that could be placed on it. Kelway also upgraded CODA's software and hardware to maximize the performance of the whole.

Key Benefits

Patrick Foyle, Business Manager at Kelway, said: "CODA benefited from the opportunity to spend a couple of days away from their own data centre so as to focus entirely on successfully resolving a specific technical issue, working alongside our experienced consultants in a like-for-like environment. CODA also had the freedom to unplug cables, test disaster scenarios, power off servers and fake drive failures to further establish the overall capabilities of a unique system. All of this was achieved in a matter of days, a result that would have been impossible in a production environment with all of the associated risks."

Richard Hall, CODA Group IT Manager, said: "Typically, CODA is an early adopter of new technologies and whilst we had this unique system nearly working, it wasn't delivering exactly what we wanted. We needed the time to focus on making some adjustments without the pressure of day-to-day activities. The key issue involved the HP blade technology talking to the storage systems we had in place in order for the Oracle cluster to work effectively. It wasn't that we were doing anything fundamentally wrong, it was more about how we were installing and configuring the technology. Kelway's Proof of Concept Centre provided a wide range of additional expertise, combined with a risk free and like-for-like set up, which enabled us to get the technology working in the way we wanted it."

"We are now running test and development scenarios for one of our key products in an environment that is underpinned by industry standard servers, saving us tens of thousands of pounds. Kelway's Proof of Concept Centre has helped us to stay on track with our product roadmap as we look to develop and take new products to market. CODA would certainly use the facility again in order to help us to focus on quickly resolving a technical issue that might assist in the creation of real and long term business benefit."

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