

Commerzbank AG

Kelway employs advanced technology to create a better trading environment for Commerzbank AG in London

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Commerzbank AG is one of Europe's leading financial institutions and is the second largest bank in Germany with a balance sheet total of over €600 billion.

Banking is a highly computing intensive business and Commerzbank's trading staff use complex applications that require powerful workstations to deliver the necessary performance.

The Challenge

Commerzbank's London trading floor is a dynamic place, with large numbers of people and equipment working at a frenetic pace. But the heat generated by all the heavyweight processors under the desks was beginning to exceed acceptable levels for the traders and, when combined with the noise levels from the cooling fans, created a poor working environment.

Conor Brobyn, Global Head of Business Support for Commerzbank knew that the situation was only going to get worse, so he needed a solution that would solve the immediate environmental problems and be able to scale to cater for tomorrow's increased demands for computing power. Conor turned to his IT partner Kelway to find a solution, as their consultants already understood the Commerzbank environment and had proven skills in infrastructure design.

Commerzbank and Kelway worked together to evaluate technologies that enabled the processors to be located remotely from the screens, but the responsiveness of this approach was not considered adequate. Kelway then proposed an innovative new technology from HP, which they had advanced knowledge about through their close relationship with the computer manufacturer.

With the HP Blade Workstation solution, Kelway has delivered much more than just a better working environment. We can now provide our traders with a powerful and flexible computing service that will scale to meet their future needs."

Conor Brobyn, Global Head of Business Support - Commerzbank AG

The Solution

The solution recommended by Kelway was the new HP Blade Workstation, an evolution of HP's blade server technology and an industry first. This approach combined the flexibility of centrally located, heavy-duty blade servers delivering ample processing power with low power thin clients producing little heat or noise at the trader's desk. Kelway also pointed out that there were many other business advantages to be gained from a blade-based solution, such as increased agility, security and reduced management costs.

Examples of the product were not readily available at the time but Kelway managed to obtain an early version and demonstrated the concept to Conor and his team. Initial tests with this simple set up were promising and Kelway proceeded to

arrange a more representative configuration with multiple servers and clients using HP facilities. "The expert help we received from Kelway in identifying and then evaluating the solution was invaluable," said Conor.

The design of the technology was clearly an excellent match for Commerzbank's needs, but the implementation had the potential to be challenging. This was because the product had only just been introduced and the only customer installation in the UK had been carried out by HP themselves. The Commerzbank deployment was only the second in the country, and the first by an HP partner.

Implementing the Solution

Commerzbank and Kelway put together a joint project to implement the solution, with Kelway supplying the equipment and managing the roll-out. Kelway engineers assembled the servers and clients and executed exacting tests to ensure performance and reliability targets were met. Commerzbank IT staff then installed the application software and carried out their acceptance evaluation.

Kelway's engineers worked hard to ensure they had all the technical information needed to design and build the infrastructure and, with the cooperation of HP product experts,

the implementation was achieved on schedule. Some early product issues did arise, resulting in slow screen refresh rates, but Kelway swiftly tracked this down to the system software versions used and, with the latest software in place, performance proved to be as hoped for.

"The technical support we received from Kelway's infrastructure experts was first class," reported Conor. "Their tenacity in seeking out answers and overcoming obstacles kept the project on track."

The Results

The HP Blade Workstation technology has met the objective of improving the trading environment, dramatically reducing the heat and noise at the trader's desk. The solution has, in addition, delivered a number of further benefits for Commerzbank that result from the blade architecture employed.

The latest blade servers are considerably more powerful than the typical desk-side workstation, with up to four clients sharing each server. This results in more cost effective use of processing resources as well as delivering higher application performance.

The flexibility inherent in blade computing provides increased resilience to hardware faults, plus scalability to easily accommodate workload growth.

HP's highly functional system management and deployment software enables blades to be provisioned to users in minutes, without the need for an engineer to visit the trading location.

Having the blade servers centrally located in the controlled environment of a data centre improves equipment reliability and greatly reduces the complexity of wiring and subsequent maintenance costs on the trading floor. And, as the client hardware is independent of the user software environment, traders can use any screen at any desk anywhere. This is a particularly valuable attribute for users travelling to other Commerzbank locations, as they can use any available client to access their own server remotely.

A major concern for any bank is the safety of its data. Having the servers and their data storage permanently residing in the data centre results in far greater data security than servers on the trading floor can provide. Also, the controlled environment and the ability to use centralised fault tolerant data storage substantially decreases the risk of data loss.

"We are delighted with the success of the blade workstation solution and with Kelway's technical support. As a result, we are now looking to see where else in the organisation would benefit from the technology," said Conor.

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