

OC&C Strategy Consultants

OC&C Strategy Consultants strive for performance improvement

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Founded in 1987, OC&C Strategy Consultants is a global consulting firm that provides strategy advice to the senior management of large corporations and organisations. Operating from 15 offices, in ten countries, its consultants aim to bring clear thinking to complex issues. This includes areas such as shareholder value, business direction, merger or acquisition and strategy realisation. The aim is to achieve lasting improvements in performance as well as long term growth, underpinned by creative, but always practical, strategic problem solving.

The Challenge

OC&C Strategy Consultants sought to consolidate and enhance the performance of its infrastructure, and achieve ROI, leveraging a server consolidation strategy that involved virtualisation. This aimed to ensure the new environment was future proofed, i.e. flexible and agile enough to cope with changing business needs. It was also particularly important to guarantee a reliable back-up, in the event of Exchange server down time.

The catalyst for the server rationalisation was a planned office move, within central London. The in-house IT team judged that it made every sense to manage the deployment of new virtualisation technologies, immediately following that relocation. As such, they required a partner with strong project management skills and technical expertise in consolidation strategies - as well as migration capability. Additionally, OC&C Strategy Consultants required added value and cost effective hardware and software procurement services.

"Kelway successfully managed an important server migration project, significantly ahead of schedule in a little more than eight hours. Whilst in helping us to rationalise the server estate as part of a virtualisation strategy, we have reduced the cost of operation. In the medium term, we have also achieved a tangible return on our investment. The new environment will meet changing business needs, offering the agility and flexibility we require of it. Kelway also provides added value product supply, from notebooks to servers."

James Wood, IT Manager - OC&C Strategy Consultants

The Solution

Relocation:

Minimum down time without business disruption.

Kelway was retained by OC&C Strategy Consultants in January 2008. Further to agreeing the brief, a project plan to manage the migration of twenty servers to a new central London location, was put in place.

Involving eight engineers, the secure demobilisation of the server estate and its re- installation took place outside of normal working hours in order to minimise down time. The migration was achieved in a little more than eight hours, substantially ahead of a schedule that allowed for a 48 hour completion time. All activity was co-ordinated with that of a number of third party contractors, including construction teams.

The migration exercise was followed by systems testing and on-site support to guarantee business as usual for end users. Ongoing support for the in-house team included assistance with handling minor technical issues, for example around the functionality of the newly implemented Symantec Backup Exec back-up solution.

Server consolidation:

Project complete, understood capabilities could virtualise remaining hardware in own time, handled in-house.

Following the successful relocation, Kelway began work on the server consolidation.

With a relatively small IT infrastructure, OC&C Strategy Consultants still used a number of older tower servers that were taking up unnecessary space. Nine of these were identified as good virtualisation candidates, nearly half the total server count.

To validate this assessment, a thirty day analysis was undertaken to gather utilization and performance metrics, using the PlateSpin Recon package - an agent free monitoring system. A project plan was subsequently developed, including a methodology for implementing the new VMware based environment.

Those servers found to be using less than 50% of their physical resources were agreed to be the ideal candidates for virtualisation. Moreover, new HP Blade technology was chosen as a high density computing environment capable of meeting the needs of both virtualisation and any physical hosts OC&C might need to deploy in the future.

The project was undertaken out of normal hours, over a weekend period. The workloads virtualised included Active Directory, Exchange 2003, SQL, File and Application servers. VMware's cold conversion method was used to import servers from the old

physical world to the new virtual one. As a high density rack-based solution, the new HP Blade Environment created considerable savings in terms of space.

The virtualised infrastructure is underpinned by a SAN storage solution from Dell EqualLogic, chosen for its cost effectiveness and ease of management. It provides sufficient capacity for existing workloads and allows for growth within the virtual environment.

A simple Windows based back-up solution was replaced with Symantec Backup Exec 12d, in conjunction with VizionCore vRanger, to fast achieve back-up and recovery of the virtual and physical environments. This is supported by a new high speed SAS-based tape solution, utilising an expansion Blade and HP tape library, for long term back-up archiving.

All necessary disposal of redundant equipment was handled in line with statutory requirements. Whilst, OC&C Strategy Consultants benefited from a pay-back for the technology it no longer required, which was refurbished for use by third parties.

OC&C Strategy has since completed the virtualisation of remaining server technologies, leveraging the knowledge and capabilities gained through the initial consolidation exercise undertaken in collaboration with Kelway.

Email back-up

Mimecast is a unified email management system. This solution was implemented following the virtualisation project. Including anti-virus and anti-spam functionality, it affords secure and reliable business continuity. In the event of an Exchange server being taken down for upgrades, Mimecast allows end users to continue using Microsoft Outlook, which is a business critical application for OC&C Strategy, with no visible difference what so ever to the service. Seamless to set up, it allows the removal of all internal email gateways and has reduced management cost, as regular manual checks are no longer required.

Supply

With these projects complete, Kelway continues to provide notebook procurement support. OC&C Strategy Consultants benefit from a cost effective, added value approach to supply on a two year replacement cycle or 'as needs' basis. Supply also includes operating system imaging and software licensing, an example being the Microsoft Select agreement.

The Results

Kelway is experienced at managing relocation projects and the server migration was completed ahead of schedule and on budget. From day one, notebook users were operational and fully supported by the network.

The server consolidation project, involving progression to a VMware environment mixed with a rationalised physical server estate and SAN solution, has delivered important performance and service improvements at a reduced operating cost. In the medium term, the firm has also achieved a tangible return on its investment.

The new network is less complicated and costly to manage with simple, centralised systems management being put in place. It's a flexible solution that can quickly respond to changing business needs. Furthermore, through the implementation of the Mimecast solution, a reliable and cost effective business continuity plan for email functionality has been delivered. Kelway continues to provide sales support on an on-going basis and is working closely with the in-house team at OC&C Strategy Consultants to design and implement a disaster recovery solution that aims to further protect the desktop environment.

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