

Old Mutual

Kelway helps Old Mutual respond to the huge growth in demand for computing capacity arising from a major acquisition

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Old Mutual is a major international financial services group specialising in savings and wealth management, with a solid foundation of experience in asset administration built over 160 years in regions as varied as South Africa and Sweden. Its primary objective is to look after people's money and competently manage individual wealth well. In 2007, the funds under management by the group exceeded £270 billion.

All financial services providers today are heavily dependent on IT systems for all aspects of their business and Old Mutual is no exception. Managing a large portfolio of assets and delivering accurate, up-to-the-minute information to staff and customers worldwide is highly computing intensive. Anything other than complete reliability of service delivery, 24 hours a day, is unacceptable.

The Challenge

When Old Mutual acquired Skandia, a leading provider of quality savings solutions operating in 20 countries, in a deal worth £3.5 billion, the management of Old Mutual's IT division faced the considerable challenge of integrating the IT operations of this sizable new business. It was clear that a major upgrade of the IT systems at their London data centre was needed.

Financial services is a highly competitive industry, so the new IT infrastructure would have to do more than just add more capacity to support the new, larger business. There was an additional need to increase the level of automation, replacing inherited manual systems with new automated IT functions to deliver more efficient services.

Nigel Blunkell, the IT Manager at Old Mutual, was assigned the task of implementing a modern, highly resilient, cost-effective solution that would be easily expandable for future growth. He was also given tight timescales to complete the project.

"The new HP based infrastructure supplied by Kelway has given us all the power and capacity we need to support the huge additional workload generated by the Skandia acquisition. We are also confident that the architecture can easily cope with further large scale growth"

Nigel Blunkell, IT Manager - Old Mutual

The Solution

“Given the scale of the operation and the limited time available, expert advice and swift action was needed, so the selection of an IT partner and equipment provider was critical,” says Nigel. “We approached Kelway for assistance, as it was an established supplier of IT hardware and support services to Old Mutual and known to have the necessary systems skills. However, the decision to proceed with Kelway was not a foregone conclusion. Any proposal had to be competitive and the chosen partner needed to demonstrate the required level of technical expertise and business acumen.”

Another key decision for the project was the selection of a single hardware manufacturer for all server and storage equipment. HP was chosen as a result of an earlier evaluation exercise by Old Mutual involving the leading computing equipment vendors. The objectives of this approach were greater certainty of successful integration and quicker implementation arising because of more efficient supplier management.

Kelway met frequently with Nigel and his team to fully understand the project’s key drivers, business requirements and constraints. “Being a longstanding HP partner, Kelway had

developed a close working relationship with the manufacturer and was able to arrange workshops and demonstrations with key HP product specialists. They were able to explain the business benefits of the products various solutions and help us gain an in-depth understanding of the technology,” comments Nigel.

The technical consultants at Kelway have extensive experience of designing HP based solutions and with their help, Nigel and his team soon had a viable infrastructure design. The solution they agreed upon featured VMware based virtualised server environments running on large farms of HP blade servers. Resilient HP StorageWorks SANs provided centralised storage for the applications.

Business continuity is a top priority when assets worth billions of pounds are being managed, so not only did the new infrastructure have to be resilient, but a remotely located Disaster Recovery (DR) capability was also necessary. To address this requirement, a DR site in London’s docklands with its own server farm and SAN system, updated in real time, was planned.

Implementing the Solution

Aggressive deadlines had been set for the completion of the project for business reasons and when combined with its large scale and the advanced technology used, meant that the logistical and project management issues were demanding. The fact that both HP and Kelway were located close to Old Mutual’s data centre in the City of London was of considerable benefit.

All the parties involved were easily accessible and key expertise could be brought in quickly to provide technical assistance and make sure the systems were correctly set up. Kelway’s excellent working relationship with HP ensured the right resources were rapidly identified and made available.

“The SAN fabric is a powerful but complex facility, so we greatly appreciated the help we received from HP’s storage

experts to make sure it was properly configured,” says Nigel, adding, “The execution of the installation project under Kelway’s control proceeded quickly and smoothly, meeting the demanding schedule ensuring implementation schedules were met.”

Another important factor contributing to the fast and error free installation of almost 100 servers was the use of the HP ProLiant Essentials Rapid Deployment Pack. This powerful systems management tool, with its easy to use graphical user interface, enabled large numbers of servers to be rapidly installed and configured automatically, releasing valuable technical resource to be utilised elsewhere on the project.

The Results

The new infrastructure is in place and stable, whilst all the Skandia operations have been successfully integrated. "The anticipated benefits of using a completely HP based solution have been realised and all the components are working together perfectly," reports Nigel. "We now have ample capacity for the increased workload and performance has been greatly enhanced. Most importantly, the new systems are achieving the very high levels of reliability that are essential for our business."

An especially valuable feature of the solution architecture for the fast moving financial services business is the ease with which extra capacity can be added, whether for additional processing power or for more storage. And the ability to respond to changing business demands is aided by the comprehensive system management facilities from HP that enable fast reconfiguration from a central console.

With regard to the future, Nigel makes the following observation: "We have complete confidence in Kelway and HP for comprehensive technical guidance and support. Kelway provides us with a single point of contact for all issues and we never hear 'its not our problem' from them."

Kelway's extensive experience of designing mission critical IT solutions, using HP technology in conjunction with VMware server virtualisation, has proved invaluable in designing and implementing an expanded, resilient environment for Old Mutual that easily accommodates the increased workload arising from the acquisition of Skandia. Old Mutual now has a modern, scalable systems architecture that will enable it to respond rapidly to future business requirements.

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