



Flexible, expert support maintains Sky leadership

HPE Datacenter Care ensures responsive support across complex IT estate

Objective

Ensure mission critical level support across hardware and software, with senior level peer-to-peer engagement

Approach

Conducted a test with HPE to assess current support capabilities ahead of RFP

IT Matters

- Delivered mission critical level support with HPE Datacenter Care across hardware and software, with 4-hour SLAs, 24/7, allowing smooth running of operations in competitive marketplace
- Consolidated the support function across one provider, simplifying management and lowering costs

Business Matters

- Ensured access to senior level R&D and engineering resources across IT function, improving problem-solving and strategic planning
- Aligned support provider with hardware provider, resulting in more immediate access to experts



Challenge

As complex as they come

Sky is the UK's leading multi-channel, multi-platform broadcaster. It is also the UK's fastest-growing home communication company and most popular 'triple-play' provider of TV, broadband and home telephony. Over 11 million UK homes enjoy Sky services; the company generated revenues of £7.23 billion in the 12 months to June 2013.

Crucial to Sky's success is its technological advantage. It was the first European broadcaster to launch a 3D channel; it leads the market for HD content and the Sky Go platform allows customers to watch content on smartphones, tablets and laptops.

The same level of sophistication applies to the back office. "I come from a financial services background. Financial services claim to have the biggest and best of everything," says Alastair Davie, head of Shared Platforms, Sky.

"The size, scope and complexity of the IT infrastructure we have at Sky is in the same league."

The smooth running of the back office enables customer calls to be answered from the contact centres, content to be streamed to mobiles, advertising rates to be determined and billed, and much more. "We take one million calls each week into our contact centres. Any interruption in service has a major impact on the business," says Davie. "If a customer hears we have an IT issue it gives the impression we can't handle our affairs and we can't allow that to happen."

A significant part of the Sky server hardware is supplied by Hewlett Packard Enterprise. HPE also provides the operating system for a critical part of Sky's digital playout – the means of connecting its set-top box with the satellite and content stream.

Customer at a glance

HPE services

- HPE Datacenter Care

“We are a very delivery-focused business. We don’t want to hear about SLAs, we want the support partner to be flexible, responsive and expert. Hewlett Packard Enterprise does what’s needed to maintain our business.”

— Alastair Davie, head of Shared Platforms, Sky

“HPE was the only one who could provide the support for key parts of the stack as the guys who know the code,” says Davie. “And it’s not enough to deliver straightforward break-fix. We have a lot of very senior technical guys here, and we wanted HPE to engage in meaningful conversations with us.”

Solution

Mission Critical, with tweaks

HPE lost the support contract in 2009; Davie says there had been a continuous effort from HPE to win back the business. “We had no doubt HPE could provide the required level of service, certainly since the acquisition of CDS. They told us they were good, we said ‘we’ll test you’.

“Conveniently, we had a tricky hardware-related problem on one of our platforms. We asked HPE if they’d like to take it on and they did. An HPE engineer came in, a very experienced guy and extremely credible. He quickly understood the importance of the issue to the business, he understood the technical workings of the server, and he had the right level of access to back end resources at HPE. He went through the options; he got it right.”

On the strength of the test, along with new commercials and SLAs, HPE won back the support contract.

There is now 24/7 reactive cover on Sky’s tens of thousands of servers, with a service wraparound on software. “It’s under the HPE Datacenter Care support banner, with a few extras unique to us,” says Davie. “And the same engineer is still on the account.”

Benefits

Expert partner, flexible support

Davie says the transition to the new support cover was seamless, conducted from midnight on January 1st: “We even dealt with a hardware issue later that day.”

HPE provides onsite engineers and rapid escalation to level 3 R&D and engineering when required. “Our expectation is that our support partner has to come to the table and contribute. HPE does,” says Davie.

“We are a very delivery-focused business. Our support partner has to understand that, on certain days, it may be a development and testing server is the most important issue – that we have a marketing launch scheduled, and advertising booked against this, all dependent on this server working. We don’t want to hear about SLAs, we want the support partner to be flexible, responsive and expert. HPE does what’s needed to maintain our business.”

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