Hewlett Packard Enterprise

Objective
Respond to business growth and replace ageing storage infrastructure

Approach
Reviewed solutions from major vendors

IT Matters
- Reduced support resolution times on servers by up to 50 per cent due to HPE Integrated Lights-Out (iLO)
- Achieved better storage utilisation rates due to HPE 3PAR Thin Provisioning, reducing storage costs
- Cut time to collate reports and information by 65 per cent with HPE 3PAR System Reporter

Business Matters
- Provided reliable solution for mission critical service delivery with zero downtime, enabling C24 to meet client SLAs
- Saved time due to straightforward management and support
- Reduced cost and improved flexibility with HPE Virtual Connect FlexFabric, which means C24 need fewer core switches

C24 provides worldwide mission-critical application delivery

Reliable HPE infrastructure underpins hosting and managed services

To meet the demands of business growth, service provider C24 chose a Hewlett Packard Enterprise infrastructure including blade servers and HPE 3PAR storage. The new solution has experienced zero downtime and has enabled C24 to save time and money in managing its systems, while providing a high level of service for its clients.

Challenge

Global Enterprise Resource Planning services
While there are many different companies providing cloud and managed services, C24 has created its own high-end niche with a specialist, differentiated offering. Based in the UK, C24 manages, secures and delivers critical business applications to large enterprise customers in over 100 countries globally.

The company's solutions include managed hosting of business critical Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP), business productivity applications and high availability disaster recovery, as well as secure backup. This includes private cloud-based solutions for many clients.

"Big organisations that have invested heavily in ERP need to find a partner such as C24 that can help deliver the solution globally to multiple sites," says Dave Ricketts, head of marketing at C24.

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> "We try and position ourselves at the high-end in terms of our technology and investment – HPE 3PAR is the Rolls Royce standard in many respects, and working with Hewlett Packard Enterprise gives us a competitive advantage and differentiation from other providers."
>
> – Dave Ricketts, head of marketing, C24

"The partner must understand ERP and the systems behind it and have the ability to deliver applications that work reliably, without latency problems."

C24 has been a long-standing HPE customer over many years and had been using HPE EVA storage at the heart of its infrastructure. Its growing business meant that C24 needed to invest in new storage and servers, and it decided the time was right to find a replacement for the EVA systems.

Solution

HPE 3PAR technical advantages

"We looked at the competition, including Dell and EMC but Hewlett Packard Enterprise technology came out streets ahead – when HPE showed us 3PAR, its technical advantages shone through," says Ricketts. "Our long standing relationship with HPE was another important factor and the fact that we know that when we order HPE kit, we can be confident that it will always be right first time."

C24 selected a complete architecture based on HPE equipment, including HPE 3PAR F400, StoreServ 72xx and StoreServ 74xx storage, HPE BL460C server blades, HPE ProLiant DL380 rack mount servers and an HPE Virtual Connect FlexFabric module.

The HPE solution is split across two Tier 4 data centres in the UK, where C24 rents co-location space. HPE Technology Services also provides Proactive Care.

Ricketts comments: "We made our decision based on wanting to have best of breed technology and HPE 3PAR fitted that bill, delivering the levels of security, resiliency and performance needed by an enterprise hosting provider like C24.

"HPE's technology features, such as thin provisioning, were important to us as well as the fact that the equipment is supported remotely," says Ricketts. "HPE had a good roadmap which is key and we felt confident that the investment in the product was there for the future. Also, having the complete solution from one vendor means it's easier for our staff to become experts in managing the infrastructure."

C24 has around 50 clients using the new HPE infrastructure, which includes a mix of companies using the private cloud environment to deliver applications globally, website hosting and on-premise backups to C24's hosting centres. Applications being delivered include JD Edwards ERP software, Microsoft® Dynamics, other Microsoft applications and warehouse management software. C24 is also an HPE CloudAgile partner, helping it demonstrate its ability to provide solutions.

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"The new system hasn't missed a beat and we've had zero downtime – helping us ensure we can meet our SLAs to clients and avoid financial penalties for outages," says Ricketts. "If we do have an issue, it's put right, often before we even know about it. When we need help, HPE is there to support us, for example taking clients to its office to demonstrate the technology."

Benefit

Time savings
C24 has found the 3PAR architecture straightforward to manage and set up, which reduces management overheads and the time spent maintaining the systems.

"We can set up our customers quickly and simply and ongoing support and maintenance is simple," says Ricketts. "The 3PAR array notifies us automatically when we reach certain capacity levels so that we can plan accordingly to reduce any potential outages, which is critical to our customers."

Time is also saved due to HPE Virtual Connect FlexFabric which minimises the workload needed to set up new customers. The features provided by HPE Virtual Connect FlexFabric also mean that C24 does not need to purchase as many expensive networking switches at the core.

"FlexFabric makes our blade management processes much more flexible and we can change workloads and where they are sitting much more easily – for example, when we need to do an upgrade on a particular blade," says Ricketts.

"With FlexFabric we can greatly reduce that timescale, which ultimately means we can spend more time with customers."

Efficient utilisation
HPE 3PAR Thin Provisioning features enable C24 to make the most of its storage capacity, helping it to control costs and deliver the best value to its clients.

"By achieving better utilisation rates within our enterprise storage array, thin provisioning means we can continue to make our hosting environment as efficient and secure as possible," says Ricketts. "The ability to thin provision storage also means that we can plan more easily for future storage requirements, thus minimising any disruption to clients who need to upgrade their storage capacity."

Effective reporting and remote management
C24 finds that HPE 3PAR System Reporter software is key for creating reports on the activity, performance and capacity of the HPE 3PAR System Reporter has also reduced the time needed by C24 to collate information on the storage array activity by 65 per cent and removes the need with its previous system to collate many different reports.

"With data growing at an exponential rate, having the ability to closely monitor the activity on the 3PAR array and distribute it within our company helps us to make better business choices and improve our services to clients," says Ricketts. "Having software that helps us to spot any issues before they occur or improve performance issues before they impact clients, is paramount to us delivering the best possible solution."

Customer at a glance

Application
Microsoft Dynamics
JD Edwards ERP solutions

Hardware
- HPE 3PAR F400 and StoreServ 72xx and 74xx SAN
- HPE c7000 BladeSystem Chassis
- HPE BL460c G7/Gen8 server blades
- HPE Virtual Connect FlexFabric Module
- HPE ProLiant DL380 rack mount servers

Software
- HPE Integrated Lights-Out (iLO)
- HPE Insight Control
- HPE 3PAR InForm management suite
- HPE 3PAR System Reporter

HPE services
- HPE Technology Services Proactive Care

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– Dave Ricketts, head of marketing, C24

To maximise reliability, C24 uses HPE Integrated Lights-Out (iLO), enabling it to manage and maintain its server infrastructure in the data centres from its head office. This has reduced support resolution times on C24's server systems by up to 50 per cent, by reducing the time needed to travel to and from the data centres.

"Having a comprehensive management solution such as iLO, that combines onsite and remote support, is crucial for delivering a reliable managed hosting solution," says Ricketts. "This brings us much closer to the infrastructure and enables us to correct any issues before they occur, minimising the potential for disruption to clients."

Mission critical service delivery
C24 has successfully built a business delivering high-value applications to clients who recognise their importance. Key to this strategy has been the HPE technology behind its service provision and Ricketts comments, "if we don't deliver, our clients' business stops. It's as simple as that and the quality of our infrastructure is therefore vital."

"We try and position ourselves at the high-end in terms of our technology and investment. HPE 3PAR is the Rolls Royce standard in many respects and working with HPE gives us a competitive advantage and differentiation from other providers," concludes Ricketts. "The HPE infrastructure has met our expectations without doubt and our clients are happy. When there's a smile on the technical director's face, you know something is right."

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