

## Case study

# Auto Trader consolidates IT for business growth



## HP blade servers are the foundation for a vital technology refresh

### Industry

Publishing

### Objective

Implement a technology refresh to support business growth and simplify IT management

### Approach

Researched the market balancing available technology against business needs. Took part in technical briefings and workshops to ensure successful implementation and compatibility

### IT matters

- Reduced data centre power and cooling from 100KW to 69KW with an equivalent cost saving
- Increased virtualisation by 60 per cent
- Cut provisioning and configuration speeds for new servers
- Introduced infrastructure simplification and achieved a robust and scalable platform

### Business matters

- Saved approximately £250,000 in data centre costs through server consolidation
- Supported significant growth in digital business
- Positioned itself as the UK's leading motoring website with 11.5 million unique visitors a month



**“Our engagement with HP is very much an ongoing partnership. The account team talks to us about new technologies and we sit down and review things together. We have good access to HP people and if we have a problem we always get a good response.”**

– Russell Warman, head of infrastructure, Trader Media Group



### Supporting business growth

To accommodate business growth, UK digital publisher Auto Trader decided to consolidate and simplify its IT environment. The group chose an HP BladeSystem infrastructure which has helped it to move from traditional print publishing to online.



## Challenge

### Multi-vendor complexity

Auto Trader, is a leading online company for UK motorists seeking new or used cars and to support business growth it needed to consolidate and simplify its IT environment.

Since 2006, the group had mixed HP ProLiant blade and rack-mounted servers with various servers, storage devices and networks from other vendors. Its primary environment is co-located at a TeleCity data centre and Auto Trader runs its own backup site. This landscape supports internally written applications to power the website, dealer applications, routine business and administration systems. It also houses SQL databases containing some 500TB of customer data and vital market intelligence which is sold on to the trade.

“We had problems managing these disparate systems because of the high level of complexity,” says Russell Warman, head of infrastructure at Auto Trader. “The costs of power, cooling and rack space were high because of the significant data centre footprint and the ageing infrastructure had a high number of outages due to network broadcast storms which were happening virtually every month.

“There were perceived bottlenecks in delivering an environment that would support demand so it was time for a technology refresh. We needed a simplified platform to support the concept of ‘any server, anywhere’. We wanted to stabilise the network, reduce complexity, lower the data centre footprint and improve efficiencies to reduce energy bills. We also needed an infrastructure that had a clear roadmap for the future and would be well supported. The refresh was vital for our business critical website and the services that are provided alongside it.”

## Solution

### Compatibility ensured

Aiming to consolidate on a single vendor solution, Auto Trader researched the market, balancing available options against business needs. It finally reduced the field to two contenders and decided to go with HP. Decision criteria included HP’s pedigree in the blade market and its ability to provide future product roadmaps and references from other customers. Due to its history with HP, the company could also make informed decisions on how new solutions would fit with its technology stack. It worked with IT partner Richardson Eyres and the HP sales team who ran technical briefings and workshops to establish how the systems would fit together.



**11.5 million**  
**Unique website**  
**users a month**

“Compatibility was important,” adds Warman. “Because of the way that the HP BladeSystem is upgradeable, we were able to replace some old components with new components and just insert new blades to extend the life of the infrastructure. It also eased the migration for the enterprise part of our systems. HP could offer us rack mounted as well as blade servers with compatibility across both and that was not the case with the competing vendor.”

Auto Trader now has 22 HP BladeSystem c7000 Enclosures that are 95 per cent populated with some 316 physical G7 and G8 HP ProLiant BL460c Server Blades. The infrastructure is co-located at TeleCity and Getronics data centres and virtualisation has increased by 60 per cent with approximately 2000 virtual machines created using a combination of VMware and Microsoft® Hyper-V. One data centre is the production site and one is Disaster Recovery (DR) but some services are run in active/active mode.

HP Virtual Connect Flex 10 was an attractive part of the solution for Auto Trader because it provided a simpler way to connect blades to the storage network. The new solution also included HP Insight Control server management software.

## Benefits

### Consolidation savings

“Deploying HP Blades has allowed us to achieve a massive amount of consolidation and reduce our footprint,” says Warman. “Rack space is down by 50 per cent in one data centre and we’ve dropped a whole suite in the other. We estimate that we have saved approximately £250,000 in the cost of data centre space.

“The technology refresh has also brought power and cooling efficiencies which have meant significant cost savings. We were running at 100KW in one data centre and that has now reduced to 69KW.”

The Auto Trader IT team are able to provision servers faster because they just take new blades out of the box and put them in the chassis. The ability to create profiles with HP Insight Control had also reduced deployment times.

“HP Virtual Connect Flex 10 has brought quite a shift in the way we work,” explains Warman. “It’s pushed down the configuration of network profiles from the network team to system administration so it makes deployment a lot faster. It now sits with just one team rather than them needing to be reliant on another team to correct network ports.”

## Customer solution at a glance

### Hardware

- HP BladeSystem c7000 Enclosures
- HP ProLiant BL460c G7 and G8 Server Blades
- HP Virtual Connect Flex 10

### Software

- HP Insight Control
- VMware
- Microsoft Hyper-V

“We’ve also seen benefits through simplification and the concept of any server, anywhere. Where we used to have two separate infrastructures for our hosting business and our internal systems we now have one HP BladeSystem infrastructure that supports both sides of our business. That enables us to achieve greater resilience because I don’t need to provide N+1 redundancy for both sides. Where I may have needed four chassis before, I just need three.”

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The IT transformation has supported Auto Trader’s move to digital. Its website is now the UK’s leading motoring website with over 11.5 million unique users a month carrying out 139 million searches on more than 360,000 new and used vehicles.

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