

Case study

dunnhumby cuts costs with ambitious data centre move



HP Relocation Service beats deadline for complex multi-vendor project

Industry

Market research

Objective

Reduce overheads by moving to a new data centre location

Approach

Used previous positive experience to select the best partner to mastermind the move

IT matters

- Experienced project managers contributed to vital pre-planning
- Specialist engineers dismantled, transported and re-built critical HP systems and quickly dealt with all technical issues
- Relocation staff liaised successfully with technical staff from other vendors

Business matters

- Relocation of over 200 items achieved with no unplanned downtime or serious business disruption
- Move completed 24 hours before planned deadline
- Significant cost reduction, improved infrastructure and better 'remote hands' service realised through move to new premises



“HP Relocation Service performed extremely well. Their planning throughout was second to none and they were on top of this move all the time.”

– Gary Brown, global operations manager, dunnhumby

dunnhumby

Complex multi-vendor move

When charges at its London data centre escalated, ‘customer science’ specialist dunnhumby decided to move its multi-vendor IT environment to a new location. This involved shifting over 200 pieces of equipment and with detailed planning, the successful move was achieved by HP Relocation Service.



Challenge

Escalating cost

dunnhumby is a leader in the field of 'customer science'. By analysing data from more than 700 million customers worldwide it uncovers valuable insights into what they want, where they want it and how much they're willing to pay for it. It then delivers that information on to its clients, enabling them to build loyalty by putting customers at the centre of every decision.

With over 20 years' experience building loyalty and competitive advantage, dunnhumby is headquartered in London but employs nearly 3,000 people across Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas. The business also includes social marketing and advocacy experts BzzAgent, merchandising and analytics software company KSS Retail and advertising technology innovators, Sociomantic.

dunnhumby's operation runs from two data centres in America and two in the UK which have an active/active architecture for high availability. With the secondary UK site located at Slough, the company's primary production centre was at a co-location facility in London Docklands but dunnhumby decided it was time for a move.

"The main reason for the move was cost because Docklands is a very expensive environment," explains Gary Brown, global operations manager at dunnhumby. "When we first went into the co-location site in Docklands we were much smaller and didn't take up much space.

"However, over the six years we were there, our business grew and our data centre requirements increased threefold. We started on one floor and eventually moved onto three and this substantial growth brought a substantial increase in cost."

After analysing the market, dunnhumby decided to relocate its Docklands environment to a facility 30 miles away in Watford. The decision was made because it would deliver lower cost, a better infrastructure and a higher level of 'remote hands' support which would avoid dunnhumby having to constantly send out its own engineers.

To avoid unplanned downtime and minimise business impact, dunnhumby hired an external project manager who handled both the UK relocation and a second relocation of a US data centre from Columbus to Louisville. It then faced the problem of how to physically move its multi-vendor Docklands environment, which included equipment for at least five different vendors.

"We didn't want five or six vendors bringing in all their transport, so we asked HP Relocation Service and its logistics partner to provide transport for all the vendors, apart from two who wanted to move their own equipment. We had a very positive previous experience with HP when it moved equipment from our Ealing headquarters to Slough so it made sense to go with somebody that we knew was good and reliable."



Solution

Detailed planning

HP Relocation Service offers complete management of equipment relocation projects. It provides a single point of contact and management for every task whether it's moving a single system across a room or a total mission-critical computing environment to a new location. A flexible service built to the customer's requirements, including management and planning to de-installation, transportation, and re-installation services.

Advanced planning was critical for the dunnhumby move and all vendors took part in several joint meetings over a six month period to ensure that they could work together as a single team. HP Relocation Service conducted a data centre audit to confirm the precise equipment to be moved and attended these meetings to understand the customers' expectation and see how it could work with the other vendors. A pilot move was carried out with a follow-up review to identify what worked well and what didn't, and the requirements were then amended where necessary.

The relocation involved moving 200 individual pieces of equipment. Each vendor provided their own project manager to dismantle the hardware, hand it to HP for transportation then be ready to receive it for rebuilding at the new site.

Work started with two network and rack preparation phases at Watford then the physical move was broken down into three events. The first involved one vendor moving their own hardware. The second saw the move of HP sever blades and hardware from a separate vendor and the third, and by far the most significant, was to move all the remaining equipment. To minimise disruption, this was planned for the four days of Easter weekend.

Benefits

Beating deadline

Although four days had been earmarked for the move, it was completed in three and systems were up and running from the Easter Monday with no unplanned downtime. This was particularly useful for dunnhumby's global clients because they access some services directly through a company web portal and not all of them close for the Easter period. Although they were impacted there was no unexpected or extended downtime and everything that happened was planned and announced before the move.

"HP's planning was very good," adds Brown. "Its project manager was involved throughout and efficient planning enabled them to keep track of all the equipment that was going to be handed over to make sure that it was transported across correctly and without any impact on the other vendors. In fact, the kit list they compiled from their audit actually identified items that we had missed in our checks.

Customer solution at a glance

HP services

- HP Relocation Service

“It was a very good relationship that went extremely well and I couldn’t fault them with the actual move. It had two project managers running it throughout and they remained on site most of the time. I can’t speak highly enough of the service that they provided for this particular move. They were excellent and it was great because they quickly identified any problems as they installed the hardware. HP people were in the data hall and the dunnhumby engineers were in a command centre. HP would come to us and report on what was up and running and all problems were logged then fixed without us having to chase them. They had it all under control.

“If there had been any unplanned downtime, it would have had a significant impact on our clients because they would not have been able to access services such as our Shop product where they can create and select reports on customer behaviour. We had the Easter weekend booked out which gave us four days but in fact, we had the servers all back up and running by midday on Easter Sunday so they were actually available for non-UK clients on Easter Monday.”

Moving to the new data centre has provided a substantial cost saving for dunnhumby and has the additional benefit of improved remote hands facilities at Watford. At Docklands it had to send its own engineers to the site but they no longer have to do that which saves time and money.

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