



The Pensions Trust put trust in new infrastructure

The Pensions Trust was founded in 1946 as the Social Workers Pension Fund, established by the National Council of Social Service (now the National Council for Voluntary Organisations).

The Trust's original remit was to cater for the pension requirements of social workers, employed by voluntary organisations that were unable to participate in public sector pension arrangements. This remit has since been widened and The Pensions Trust is now one of the leading multi-employer occupational pension funds in the UK for the charitable, social, educational, voluntary and not-for-profit sectors.

The Challenge

In common with many organisations, The Pensions Trust was finding its data volumes growing as demand for storage capacity rose. Both internal service level requirements and

external regulatory and compliance were becoming an increasing burden. Finally, the provision of critical new business applications precipitated a review by the Trust of its existing server infrastructure.

The decision was made to move away from a disparate, independent, server infrastructure, with a slow tape-based backup and restore disaster recovery procedure. The Trust was convinced that the business could be made more responsive, and operational costs reduced, by the implementation of a new server infrastructure and disaster recovery solution.

Darren Bull explained, "system reliability and continuous information access is critical for our organisation. Our IT architectures were not fault tolerant and the resulting downtime was adversely impacting on our growing business

PROJECT PROFILE:

- Server infrastructure refresh
- Disaster recovery
- EMC storage technology
- Virtualisation using VMware

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operations. We wanted to create a strategy and a flexible infrastructure to cope with capacity increases and keep our systems available.”

These requirements meant the Trust needed to find a flexible storage area network solution that could consolidate its data storage to provide reliability, recovery and improved utilisation rates. By automating management and provisioning of the Trust’s server infrastructure, this would reduce operational costs, simplify its management and increase responsiveness to the Trust’s business demands.

The Solution

The Trust enlisted the expertise of Softcat, their incumbent IT solutions provider, who were tasked with creating the most effective storage technology solution and project managing its delivery. After conducting a comprehensive review of the Trust’s storage needs, Softcat’s specialist storage team proposed a flexible data storage infrastructure, with a primary system based at the Trust’s office in Leeds replicated to a mirrored platform at a remote site, to ensure limited downtime.

Softcat recommended an EMC solution to manage the data within the Trust’s new infrastructure, and selected the new CLARiiON CX3 UltraScale series as a stable platform offering excellent scalability for long-term business demands. EMC’s data management solutions offer industry-leading performance, high levels of resilience and availability – with fault detection, isolation and error correction capabilities. The CLARiiON CX3 UltraScale also offers tiered storage, which would enable the Trust to migrate infrequently accessed data without disruption to cheaper disk within the same array, thereby reducing total costs.

The Trust wished to implement VMware’s Virtual Infrastructure 3 (VI3), which would allow the consolidation of multiple server instances onto fewer physical hosts. This would reduce the number of physical servers needed and speed up the provisioning of new servers when required. VMware VirtualCenter 2 would be deployed to manage, monitor and provision the virtual servers from a browser-based interface.

The first EMC CLARiiON CX3-20 was deployed at the Leeds site, for primary data such as file stores, SQL & Exchange. The data was split across the latest fibrechannel and ATA drives, while two fibre-channel switches were specified to ensure redundancy. A second EMC CLARiiON CX3-20 was configured at the remote site to mirror the live site in Leeds.

EMC’s mirroring software, MirrorView, was used to provide a disaster recovery element to the solution, increasing the Trust’s application availability whilst driving down backup times. The software offers synchronous and asynchronous remote mirroring capabilities, protecting the Trust’s critical data in the event of a site outage. To protect from system failure, the software also enables the creation of local point-in-time copies of data, which can be used for testing, backup and fast recovery.

The whole project was delivered in a timely manner; the whole process from initial consultation, through recommendation to implementation took only six weeks.

The Benefits

Softcat and EMC have delivered a reliable, flexible, manageable and robust server and storage infrastructure which enables the Trust to meet the required service levels of the organisation. The solution is also scalable to meet the Trust’s future needs and will increase productivity by delivering stable, performing applications.

Darren Bull concluded,

“We have now achieved our aim of developing a streamlined, leading edge, virtual storage infrastructure. We can easily provision servers, achieve a high degree of system availability over our infrastructure and it is all easy to manage. EMC and Softcat worked well to help us achieve these benefits every step of the way. As well as the great technology, we have gained real value from the full breadth of the expertise, experience and standards of our IT partners.”