MCC ARE BOWLED OVER BY SOFTCAT

Datacentre

Software licensing

Founded in 1787, the Marylebone Cricket Club – better known, throughout the cricketing world, as MCC – is the world's most famous cricket club. From the very beginning, MCC's role has evolved.

Today, its key responsibilities include:

- Ensuring that Lords remains a ground which is worldclass, as well as world famous.

- Promoting cricket's laws and safeguarding the spirit of cricket.

- Promoting cricket to young people, for the long-term good of the game.

- Helping to increase cricket's international appeal – not least through its teams' touring programmes.

- Maintaining its position as the world's most active cricket-playing club. MCC runs a lean IT department that takes responsibility for the organisation's entire IT infrastructure. With office space at a premium, relatively tight budget and a small server room, MCC's IT department had to balance the increasing demand for additional server capacity against costs and physical space.

Softcat had been working with MCC for a number of years, initially providing software licensing and similar services. MCC's IT Manager, Steve Jones, recognised the value that this knowledge and relationship brought to MCC; however, it was only after a review meeting with his account manager that he realised the full extent of the services that Softcat could deliver.

Space Becomes an Issue

Coincidentally, at the time, MCC were considering alternatives to a traditional server infrastructure. "We were rapidly running out of space, both in terms of server capacity and in physical floor space," explained Steve. "Our initial investigations indicated that a virtualised platform could give us the capabilities that we needed, but we acknowledged that we didn't have the necessary internal expertise to implement such an environment." As most of the responsibility for establishing, managing and maintaining a virtualised environment would fall under his responsibility, Paul Long, MCC's Infrastructure Manager, attended some external training courses to get a better understanding of the issues involved in a virtualisation migration project. "The courses were adequate but convinced me that our small IT team would not be able to undertake such a project without seriously affecting our other responsibilities and day-to-day activities," said Paul. "It was clear that we needed to partner with a specialist organisation that had the necessary experience and track-record that comes from managing and implementing virtualisation migration projects."

MCC met with several companies, including Softcat – who took the time to really understand MCC's objectives for the project and, before designing a solution, made arrangements for MCC to see demonstrations of the technology they were proposing.

As a VMware Premier Partner with solution competencies in infrastructure virtualisation, business continuity and desktops, Softcat has special access to VMware technologies and technical support that is not available to most other organisations and in association with VMware was able to address all of the issues highlighted by MCC.

It's Relationships that Count

"Softcat also arranged for us to meet with EMC, another of their partners, as we were planning to include SAN technologies in our new environment," continued Steve. "Between them, Softcat, VMware and EMC were able to answer all of our questions, outline the issues that we were likely to face and explain how these could be resolved."

"It was clear to us that VMware was the way to go," added Paul. "As we had complete confidence in Softcat, particularly because of their close relationships with both vendors and recent experience in delivering similar projects for other customers, we had no hesitation in partnering with them for our project."

Softcat worked very closely with MCC's IT team to commence the installation and configuration of their three host servers (a mix of new and repurposed existing boxes) and SAN. Knowledge transfer from both Softcat and EMC engineers throughout the process enabled Paul to start the migration to the virtualised environment. The initial phase went live within three weeks with eight virtual machines hosted on the new platform. Almost immediately, MCC began to realise the benefits that a virtualised environment brings.

"Virtualisation will reduce the number of servers, which has obvious floor space savings, and also cut our power consumption," explained Steve. "However, there were far more important benefits."

The First Step in a Disaster Recovery Solution

An issue that had been of concern to MCC was business continuity and disaster recovery. In addition to allowing MCC to take full advantage of the advanced functionality inherent in VMware, the EMC SAN provided a high degree of local availability and a platform to deliver a business continuity solution. "Virtualisation was the first step in setting up a full disaster recovery solution," added Paul. "MCC is currently evaluating the benefits of installing a second SAN to replicate data and provide up-to-the minute data security in the event of a disaster."

With 8 virtual servers already live, MCC plans to add a significant number of additional virtual servers over the coming months. "The process is astonishingly quick and easy," continued Paul. "I have created a number of templates and can now roll out servers in around 5 minutes – a facility that has been immensely valuable."

MCC will use this capability in the near future as they upgrade their financial systems. The in-house ability to create a test migration platform will allow them to ensure that any issues or problems that arise can be resolved without compromising the existing application. Softcat's consultancy team will be on hand to provide their customary high levels of support and advice to MCC.

"The entire project has been extremely successful and has expanded our capabilities considerably," concluded Steve. "Softcat has become part of the team and has provided us with the specialist training and knowledge transfer that we needed in order to efficiently manage our virtualised environment internally."

"There is a valuable lesson here; for projects of this complexity, organisations need a partner that brings the necessary experience and expertise to the table. For MCC, Softcat is that partner."