



IAAS A VALUABLE NOTCH ON THE BELT

Fenner plc is a leading British-based manufacturer of industrial belting and other polymer-based products. It is headquartered in Hull and is FTSE-listed. Founded in 1861, Fenner Group today employs over 5,000 people worldwide and has an annual turnover in excess of £600 million. The Group is a dominant force in the markets in which it operates, across five continents with 36 manufacturing facilities plus 56 sales and service companies based throughout the world.

The Challenge

When the need arose to overcome a single point of failure surrounding their critical IBM Notes email environment, Fenner turned to longstanding IT partner Softcat for support.

"The email gateway itself is onsite at our HQ in Hull, but we have plans to move away from IBM Notes at some point so we wanted to make sure we had high levels of resilience whilst being mindful that whatever we put in place might not be needed or would potentially have to be replaced," explains Richard Ellis IT Manager at Fenner. Having a strong in-house IT team, Fenner felt confident that they would be able to manage and maintain any solution themselves but needed advice and guidance on what would meet their needs best.

The Solution

With a new solution potentially on the horizon, Softcat felt strongly that outright purchase of the technology needed would be impractical as well as costly so proposed an Infrastructure-as-a-Service (IaaS) solution as an alternative. This would provide all the physical and virtual infrastructure needed, storage required and automation technologies all hosted from Softcat's state-of-the-art Data Centre in London.

Nick Barron, Managed Services Specialist at Softcat continues, "We felt that taking an IaaS service would be the best option for Fenner. It would negate the need to pay outright and over the odds for an on-premise solution that may not be needed further down the line or the need to host and manage more physical equipment. We would give the Fenner team all the access rights they needed to then manage the solution from our infrastructure on a day-to-day basis."

The Benefits

Fenner were impressed with the proposal and liked the fact that the solution would provide them with all the physical hardware they would need, the ability to create virtual machines and the freedom to tailor the solution to their precise requirements. With robust SLAs and uptime guarantees, the availability they would

experience would also be in excess of anything they would be able to achieve alone with an on-premise solution. Business as usual headaches, like patching and bug fixes traditionally associated with running an on-premise infrastructure, would also be taken off their hands.

"It's been a perfect solution for us. The infrastructure was live almost immediately meaning no need to fuss over sourcing kit, making space in the Data Centre or investing loads of time getting everything working together. The initial plan was to use the Data Centre as a failover for the mail gateway, but such has been the resilience of it, this has now been changed to be the primary route for mail," explains Richard.

As Fenner experience changes in their business in terms of users or volumes of data to be backed up, the service can also flex up or down as required. A simple phone call into the Softcat Network Operations Centre (NOC) activates these changes to the underlying computing resources immediately. The NOC is also on hand to support on technical issues and is responsible for ensuring that the Fenner infrastructure is continually up-to-date and using the latest releases of the technology and tools at their disposal.

Now, in the event that there is a failure with hardware, software or a communication link at either the Data Centre or HQ, email will continue to route through the other location.

The simple charging structure Softcat operates also makes for straightforward budgeting claims Richard. "We're literally charged on the basis of the resources we consume, so as we create more virtual machines or need more resources to drive the environment the cost goes up. Likewise, should we need less we can throttle it back accordingly. It's not complex at all and it's valuable to have a predictable monthly cost for operating this element of our infrastructure."

Having originally signed for a one year contract the service has recently been renewed for another year, such is the level of satisfaction with the arrangement. Whilst the migration to the new platform had not happened as quickly as they first thought, Fenner has been able to confidently continue with the legacy email environment knowing that there are reliable measures in place to keep this critical service operational.

Why Softcat?

Richard concludes, "From start to finish the Softcat team made this a really pain-free experience. We had our solution in place in a fraction of the time it would have taken to build from scratch on-premise. We have all the flexibility we need and we have a predictable cost – what's not to like!"

Key Facts

- Leading manufacturer of industrial belting and polymer-based products
- Founded in 1861
- Listed on FTSE
- 5000 staff worldwide
- £800m annual turnover

Solution Highlights

- Infrastructure-as-a-Service
- Physical and virtual
- Infrastructure
- Storage and Automation technology
- Hosted from state-of-the-art Softcat Data Centre in London

Critical Success Factors

- Robust DR solution
- Temporary to semi-permanent solution
- Ability to self-manage using in-house team

At a Glance

- Available immediately
- Scale up or down at will
- Compelling uptime guarantees
- Fuss free approach