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RIVER ISLAND

2008
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River Island is one of today's most successful retail chains, with over 250 stores operating in the UK, Republic of Ireland, Europe, the Middle East and Far East. As a growing company with regular new store openings, River Island needs an IT infrastructure that is flexible, scalable, resilient and cost-effective.

Storage Array upgrade

River Island recently implemented a new storage array as its existing storage array was reaching the end of its life, leading to increased TCO and extra capacity was required for planned business growth. After reviewing the partners available with HP expertise and undergoing a rigorous due diligence exercise, River Island selected OCSL as its strategic HP partner.

"Our first engagement with OCSL was at a time when we were refreshing our storage requirements and although we engaged with OCSL late in the project they quickly absorbed the requirements and tabled several solutions that met our objectives." says Cres Kelly, Computer Services Manager.

OCSL recommended and deployed a solution based on the XP12000 from HP. River Island now has two storage arrays based on the XP12000; one at its main data centre and one at an alternative location to meet

the Business Continuity and Disaster Recovery requirements.

"As well as reducing maintenance costs, the new XP's have facilitated improved performance and faster run times – we do a lot of batch processing to process data retrieved from our stores and enable us to replenish stock," said Barry Langan, Virtualisation Team Leader at River Island. ***"This has also decreased our overnight batch processing window and allows us more latitude when implementing new systems or when overnight issues need to be addressed"***.

Capacity planning

Following the Storage Array project, River Island continued the development and implementation of strategic initiatives and decided to examine their virtualisation requirements. OCSL undertook a Capacity Planning exercise over a period of weeks, which reported that River Island could make a substantial reduction in the number of servers. This led to cost savings, improved resilience and increased flexibility to respond to the needs of the business and provided a smaller footprint for the new datacenter project underway.

"OCSL's Capacity Planning exercise was a very straightforward process, with a lot less disruption than expected," said Langan. ***"It showed us what we could do with our estate, the needs for VMware virtualisation and the benefits we could expect – for example, it showed wastage of resources such as servers only used for 2 hours out of every 24, with many of its servers running at high usage for relatively short periods to execute batch processing."***

As well as reducing the number of servers, the Capacity Planning report showed that River Island could use VMware tools to improve its disaster recovery capabilities and in particular to minimise the time required to bring business-critical applications back online.

"The Capacity Planning exercise was shown as being spot on when we got to the real virtualised solution," said Langan. ***"There were a few fluctuations, but they average out as OCSL had said they would."***

Virtualisation benefits

Due to the virtualisation, River Island was able to reduce the existing 60 servers in its data centre to just 4. The number has now grown to 109 virtual machines, running on 6 ESX hosts on HP ProLiant DL380 servers.

“The process of moving to the new virtualised servers was very, very smooth,” said Langan. ***“There’s inevitably a little bit of downtime, but with the tool provided by VMware as part of the enterprise package, it’s as simple as clicking six buttons.”***

“The main benefits of virtualisation are reductions in the space required, as we’ve removed a need for nearly 60 physical machines and the corresponding reductions in power, network parts and maintenance,” said Langan.

The expected ROI has more than been achieved due to the reduced maintenance contracts with fewer legacy systems, savings including power, air conditioning and reduced expenditure of new systems.

In fact the payback period for the entire project was just 18 months.

River Island has found the new servers are more manageable. In particular, the provision time for a new machine has been reduced significantly. ***“Once the requirement for a server has been approved the actual time for provisioning the server is less than half an hour - we are now much more agile in our response to business needs,”*** said Langan.

Reliability and uptime are vital; as River Island’s core services run on a configuration which includes the XP’s and virtualised servers. If there was an outage of the core services we would be unable to replenish stores and Business Continuity provisions would need to be invoked. To maximise resilience, the virtualised machines are situated on the two SANs – one at River Island’s main data centre and one at a disaster recovery location. BC/DR trials have demonstrated significant improvement in the restoration of services and currency of data that now meet the BC objectives set by the business. In BC/IDR trials of the new virtualised solution, all the VMware-related systems (including all business-critical applications) were restored well within expectations.

“I was very happy with the service from OCSL and I’d rate their expertise very highly,” said Langan. ***“OCSL knew the road bumps and gave us a good feeling that the virtualisation project wasn’t a journey of discovery for them. The inhibitors came up at a very early stage so we had time to deal with them - for example, the down time to move the machines was explained early to us so we had a clear plan”.***

In conclusion, Cres Kelly says: ***“OCSL have repeatedly demonstrated their technical and professional expertise and it is refreshing to work with people who quickly ‘cut to the chase’ and work out requirements in partnership with River Island staff and can get on with the job.”***



Why partner with OCSL

OCSL is a leading Preferred Partner for Hewlett Packard and has just been announced as HP UK's Preferred Partner of the Year for our work with Corporate and Enterprise customers.

OCSL also works closely with software industry leaders including Microsoft, Symantec and VMware, to ensure we can always deliver the right solutions for our clients. We differentiate ourselves through our expertise in providing Technology Solutions to Business Issues. We supply to companies who care about their IT, who value their data and see it as critical to the business and who want a supplier with in-depth knowledge and resources who can prove ROI.

Accreditations

OCSL are a top HP Preferred Partner 2008 and have been awarded Fastest Growing Preferred Partner in Europe.

HP Accreditations:

HP StorageWorks Solutions Specialist
HP Data Centre Solutions Specialist
HP Computing Systems Specialist
HP High Performance Computing Specialist
Authorised Business Solution Partner (ABSP) - Service Specialist
HP Service Sales Specialist

Other Accreditations:

Microsoft Certified Partner
VMWare Enterprise VIP Partner and Gold VAC (Consulting Partner)
Symantec Gold Partner (Enterprise Vault Accredited)
Red Hat Advanced Partner (Linux)
Oracle Certified Partner

What to do next

From our Support Sales Team to our Technical Consultants, it is the quality of our people and the level of the accreditations they hold that makes us the company we are.

We'd welcome an opportunity to show how OCSL's Technology Solutions have helped our customers Increase Profitability, Reduce Risk, Improve Business Agility and Lower Costs. We'd welcome the opportunity to be benchmarked against your current suppliers because we know OCSL can offer you smarter alternatives.

Simply contact OCSL on 0845 605 2100, email info@ocsl.co.uk or visit the website at www.ocsl.co.uk

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