

Improving Agility with Virtualisation Solutions



"In our old environment, it would take us one to two days to install and test a new database server. From a business point of view this was simply too long, but we can now create, test and discard multiple clones of our production servers in a couple of hours, using just a few mouse clicks. OCSL has therefore improved our agility by a factor of five or more."

Sheriff Dabiri, IT Director, Vivid Imaginations



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Bratz Tm & MGA Entertainment Inc

Consolidated infrastructure for reduced risk at Vivid.

Based in Guildford, Vivid Imaginations is the UK's leading toy and game company. As well as designing and manufacturing its own highly successful brands, Vivid holds the UK distribution rights for toys produced by companies such as MGA Entertainment, Zizzle and Jakks Pacific. Popular brands currently managed by Vivid include Crayola, WWE, Bratz and Fifi & the Flowertots, together with the master toy line for Disney's Pirates of the Caribbean II.

Vivid operates in a rapidly moving market where the ability to bring concepts to market quickly is a key success factor. In addition, highly efficient internal operations are seen as crucial to Vivid's continuing success. Thus functions such as IT are as streamlined as possible. However, the crucial role of IT in supporting the companies operations means that the demands placed on the infrastructure are constantly growing.

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"One of the IT departments responsibilities is to identify potential problems long before they become critical business issues," explained Sheriff Dabiri, IT Director. "Some time ago we became aware that our increased reliance on multimedia would ultimately swamp our storage infrastructure. It wasn't a problem we could solve just by adding more storage capacity: we had to make more radical changes."

Expert partner.

In addition to implementing a consolidated storage and backup solution, Vivid decided to carry out a full refresh and consolidation of its server systems, with virtualisation to support greater business agility. In addition, it would migrate to Windows Server 2003 and implement several new Microsoft applications. As a long-standing user of HP hardware, Vivid asked HP to recommend an implementation partner. HP recommended OCSL.

"As soon as we made contact with OCSL, we realised that their people were experts in the technologies that interested us," commented Dabiri. "In addition, OCSL enjoyed a close relationship with both HP and VMware, the global leader in virtualisation."

OCSL provided Vivid with a consolidated solution based on an HP StorageWorks EVA 4000 storage system and an HP ProLiant DL385 server farm running VMware ESX Server. A HP StorageWorks MSL 6030 Tape Library was installed for backup across the storage area network (SAN). In addition, OCSL undertook the design and implementation of a new Microsoft environment, including Active Directory, Exchange 2003 and ISA Server 2004. They also installed and configured HP Systems Insight Manager (SIM) for centralised management of the server farm.

According to Dabiri, the most challenging aspect of the project was the need to coordinate all new systems and services so they could go live simultaneously. With the Christmas period being crucial for Vivid's sales, all work had to be completed by September and project time scales were very tight. In the event, OCSL met all deadlines.

"The implementation exceeded all our hopes and expectations. It was of the highest quality in terms of people, technology, services and products," said Dabiri.



Risk reduction.

Nearly all Vivid's server resources are now virtualised. According to Dabiri, this supports higher levels of efficiency and flexibility. Also, new servers can be commissioned in minutes whereas the same process would have taken weeks in the past.

"Our business needs can change very quickly as we acquire new licences and distribution agreements.

If, for example, we need to implement new data analysis capabilities at short notice, we can now install and test a new database server in less than two hours," said Dabiri.

Vivid also has much more redundancy in its infrastructure, with the result that if one system becomes unavailable, the impact will be less severe than in the past.

"In the short term, we could lose one or even two servers and still keep going with very little effect on our operations. The added protection offered by the new storage solution means that by the end of the year, the risk of data loss in the event of a disaster will have been reduced by more than 60 per cent," commented Dabiri.

Although the OCSL solution has not led to a direct reduction in Vivid's IT costs, it has eliminated the need for additional IT resources to manage the growing infrastructure. Indeed, as Dabiri points out, the complexity of the new infrastructure is well hidden: configuration and management are simple and straightforward. Furthermore, he believes that the OCSL solution has circumvented an imminent crisis associated with rapidly growing data volumes.

Vivid is now exploring the use of new Microsoft functionality such as the direct push email feature of Exchange 2003, which will help the sales force and senior managers work more efficiently whilst on the move. Other forthcoming developments include the creation of a media manager application to catalogue and document the 600,000 media files currently stored on the network and the implementation of a complete disaster recovery project. OCSL's involvement will certainly continue.

"OCSL delivered exactly what they promised and completed everything on time even when complications arose. They did much better than any IT company I've dealt with in the past," Concluded Dabiri.

Why partner with OCSL

OCSL has been assisting organisations to maximise their IT investment for over 15 years. Our world-class partnerships with organisations like HP, VMware and Microsoft means that we have the knowledge to look at your IT estate with fresh but experienced eyes.

Our specialist areas include server consolidation, SAN deployments, creating integrated backup strategies and tailored support contracts. So you can rest assured that you are in safe hands.

Installed and supported by the infrastructure experts

You can feel reassured that partnering with OCSL brings you immediate expertise and on-going support. OCSL are a highly accredited HP partner and one of just a handful of ASMP (Authorised Service Management Partners), for HP. This means that backed by HP, OCSL can tailor an exact support solution to meet your needs from 4 hour on site response to ship to site for disaster scenarios.

What to do next

We'd welcome the opportunity to be benchmarked against your current suppliers because we know OCSL can offer you smarter alternatives – that's why our customers include well-known organisations like Sanofi Aventis, Allianz Cornhill and Williams F1.

Simply contact the team on 0845 6052100, email info@ocsl.co.uk or visit the web site at www.ocsl.co.uk



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