



DATA CENTRE CONSOLIDATION CASE STUDY

Finance & Insurance Sector

Acquisitive insurance business consolidate and centralise a fragmented IT infrastructure spread across 14 locations worldwide into two regional data centres.

Customer Profile:-

Industry:-	Finance & Insurance
Founded:-	1993
Employees:-	1300
Office Locations:-	14 Globally
Turnover:-	£250m+

Executive Summary

For progressive and acquisitive businesses, dealing with fragmented silos of IT can be challenging, particularly when you are continuing to grow and you need technology services to scale.

Our client found themselves in this position when they engaged with us; they had been expanding rapidly for many years and following the acquisition of a run-off insurance business and IT services were being delivered in 14 locations worldwide to 1300 users.

The skillsets and technologies across these sites were not consistent or harmonised, which was starting to put a strain on IT teams in certain regions. External Auditors had highlighted risks around disaster recovery, which as a Sarbanes Oxley regulated business had to be addressed.

With the business set for further growth and the capacity for storage, networking and server resources within each region already constrained, they knew that something had to change. Centralising its data centres was an option, but this needed to be weighed up technically and commercially against other approaches whilst ensuring that they adhered to the compliance requirements in each region they operated in. They consulted F-IT, its trusted partner for advice.

Our approach

The scope of the project made it vitally important to understand more about where the company was today and what its plans were in the future; both in terms of the strategy of IT and the business.

We spent a lot of time with key stakeholders across the business to ensure that we had the right exposure into how the business operated in order to provide a comprehensive series of recommendations that were designed to help the business create a solution that was scalable, compliant and future proof. We spend time conducting these detailed pre recommendation reviews to ensure that we are properly tuned-in to the direction the client is taking and account for all potential obstacles as part of the project plan.

We designed a blueprint for two regional data centres, one in the UK the other in the US that would consolidate, centralise and simplify the IT infrastructure, applications and services. As this approach meant radical change for the organisation, we produced detailed discovery documentation that outlined what their options were, provided justification to each specific recommendation and showed analysis on the expected return on investment.

“Our recommendations were detailed and backed by research, whilst it was agreed that a new approach was needed for the business to achieve its growth plans, the radical changes needed to be managed carefully and practically”

Andy Sellers, Managing Director, F-IT

Success through collaboration

The recommendations we presented were approved and a project plan was developed that broke down each implementation stage culminating in two new data centres, connected via a dedicated point-to-point fibre link, with each data centre acting as a disaster recovery facility for the other. The UK data centre build was relatively straight forward as it was a new build so we could rapidly implement connectivity, compute, networking, storage and security solutions. The US data centre was more complicated as it required the migration of data services and applications. We worked collaboratively with local IT teams and business owners to plan the migrations in detail in order to minimise disruption to the company. Based upon the unique requirements of each business unit and to ensure local data security and privacy laws were adhered to, several migration methods were used.

Technology stack implementation included:-

- **VMWare**
- **Dell EqualLogic**
- **Cisco Switching**
- **Secureworks**
- **Riverbed**
- **Websense**
- **Exagrid**
- **Arcserve**

As well as procuring and implementing the right technology stack, in order to supplement the resource of the in-house IT team and complement their skill set, F-IT provided a managed service designed to ensure a smooth and non-disruptive migration for the users onto the new platform. The service also included day-to-day system monitoring and proactive maintenance across both data centres to ensure uptime was maximised.

Results and future plans

- Consolidated and centralised IT operations from 14 locations to 2 regional data centres
- Implemented a brand new infrastructure architecture with no interference to day-to-day business operations
- More than 2600 components proactively monitored and maintained daily
- 60TB changed data replicated for disaster recovery
- Significantly improved risk profile across all regions, achieving 100% uptime since its deployment 3 years ago
- Delivered a compliant and auditable technology infrastructure

The business has continued to grow in the knowledge that they have a technology platform that supports their current needs as well as being suitable for their business growth ambitions.