Case study
Professional Services

Building a better future for world leading architects

Benchmarking and optimising the existing estate, and balancing knowledge across the team, ensured efficient business continuity plus effective planning for future scalability

The Customer

Fosters + Partners is one of the most innovative architecture and integrated design practices in the world. Over the past four decades the practice has pioneered a sustainable approach to architecture through a strikingly varied range of work, from airports to private houses and even super yachts.

With offices worldwide and buildings on six continents, IT understandably plays an important role here, with the latest technologies delivering a competitive edge to the business.

What did the customer want to do?

Following a restructure of the Infrastructure Operations Team, Foster+Partners wanted to establish a baseline of their virtual environment, in order to give the business confidence in decisions that were being taken with regard to future projects. A new team was being formed, with tight deadlines to carry out any troubleshooting and be in a position to move forward.

The customer was keen for this assessment to be undertaken by an organisation with no prior knowledge of their specific environment, who would be able to complete an inventory of the estate, conduct a health check, and then identify how it could be optimised and enhanced allowing for future business growth. Xtravirt was chosen for being recognised as a Centre of Excellence for consulting on the highly complex IT topics of cloud and virtualisation solutions.

An additional requirement was to create a high level plan to prioritise the proposed actions, including carrying out any immediate remedial action necessary to deal with issues that might threaten the stability of the environment.

At a glance

Requirements

- Conduct IT estate inventory and health check
- Identify optimisation and enhancements ready for future expansion
- "Do more with less" by augmenting what IT investments were already in place

Solution

- Actioned immediate remedial work to optimise existing storage
- SONAR used to rapidly provide benchmarks and identify recommended actions
- Identified future project work to allow the estate to scale with business needs

Result

- Fully documented and updated configuration of the environment, including benchmarking
- Creation of maintenance plan to ensure good knowledge across all team members
- Production of staged work plan for proposed further actions

What did Xtravirt do to help?

The first step was to conduct a review of the VMware vSphere® environment and report on resource utilisation. This included using Xtravirt's analytics and reporting modules powered by SONAR, where all data points were rapidly and precisely targeted, collected and analysed to produce a report which highlighted:

- Environment updates required to meet latest security releases
- Fixes required to resolve lingering issues with the vSphere estate
- Deficiency in failover capacity (vSphere host redundancy) in some sites
- Management issues around network redundancy and configuration
- Mismatched host hardware
- Low disk space available, making virtual machines unstable
- The many virtual machines requiring patch updates

A priority was to ensure the environment had sufficient storage capacity for future business growth. With no immediate plan to purchase more hardware, the report output enabled Foster+Partners to plan a more efficient disk and server configuration to ensure the storage was optimised, and allowed for business growth without additional investment.

In order to ensure confidence within the team to perform ongoing infrastructure maintenance, based on the findings of the SONAR report, a document was created detailing routine maintenance tasks which would increase stability in the platform. This would address any deficits and imbalances in knowledge within the team, further reducing risk to business.

What was the outcome of the engagement?

- Thoroughly documented fixes, plus production of ongoing routine maintenance task plan ensured that all IT team members would be fully informed to manage the systems going forward
- Realistic and rapid benchmarking of the storage and memory in the estate using analytics and reporting modules powered by SONAR, meant that consultant time resource was optimised throughout the engagement, as well as providing an important reference to determine objectives in future planned projects
- Updated and standardised estate configuration permitted efficient short term business continuity, while also enabling effective assessment for future scalability with business needs
- Staged work plan for proposed further actions and projects provided confidence for the customer's intended vSphere work, giving them a more informed perspective for their own planning

"Xtravirt's capability enabled us to understand our virtual environment in a very short space of time. The valuable report provided us with a high quality, detailed output, helping enormously in making our environment more efficient and robust with clearly recommended areas requiring investigation / remediation. In a very short period of time we knew exactly which areas to focus on to establish a baseline for our virtual environment."

Gary Taylor, IT Infrastructure Manager, Foster + Partners

Xtravirt is a leading, independent provider of enterprise virtualisation solutions. We deliver data centre, workspace and cloud transformational solutions to clients across public and private sectors, both in the UK and internationally.

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