

Dimension Data's Enterprise Architecture Consulting Service provides a major energy supplier with the insights it requires to optimise and future-proof its data centre

industry:

Energy

country:

North America

business challenge:

Having drafted an internal roadmap for a data centre upgrade, the company saw value in engaging the services of an objective, third-party with specific expertise, in order to validate its plans and enable it to move forward with the technology refresh with confidence

solution:

Opting into Dimension Data's enterprise architecture services enabled the client to develop an actionable data centre optimisation plan

results:

- A thorough audit of its existing data centre equipment enabled the client to identify technology gaps and overlaps as well as eliminate redundant equipment
- Areas of weakness were identified and transformed into opportunities to improve efficiencies and save costs
- Having validated and honed its initial plans, the client was able to move forward with its data centre technology refresh with confidence

With Dimension Data's assistance, a North American energy company was able to **put in place an actionable data centre optimisation plan**. Our role included the **discovery of overlapping technologies, provision of details** on how best practices in one area might impact another area and the **development of a master plan that pulled together all the individual strategies** in an orchestrated fashion.

Client Overview

Headquartered in Raleigh, North Carolina, the client is a Fortune 250 diversified energy company with more than 23,000 megawatts of generation capacity and \$10 billion in annual revenues.

Business Challenge

Burdened with legacy data centre infrastructure, some of which was almost two decades old, the client realised it needed to undertake a large-scale technology refresh, in order to ensure its data centre remained reliable, robust and most importantly, future-proof.

"Faced with a proliferation of technologies within its data centre, the client was concerned about the risks associated with not having a thorough grasp of all the technologies in place, as well as the processes supporting them," explains David Cottingham.

Dimension Data's global professional services director for Data Centres and Storage. Having drafted an internal roadmap for the upgrade, the company

saw value in engaging the services of an objective, third-party with specific expertise, in order to validate its plans and enable it to move forward with the technology refresh with confidence. The client was cognisant of the fact that such an assessment would enable it to uncover gaps that its own internal team might have overlooked and explore alternative opportunities for cost savings and greater efficiencies.

This led to the company taking the decision to issue an RFP, the scope of which included a review of the proposed strategies for the following technology areas: Windows and mixed UNIX environments, server virtualisation, server blade solutions, on-line and archived storage, storage virtualisation / management, data centre networking and desktop virtualisation.

Also in scope was a thorough review of the following processes, through the lens of industry-best practices: Engineering approaches, support processes, capacity management and data centre operations.

The company also sought to gauge the skills-levels of its internal resources, in order that any gaps or areas of weakness

Relationship History

At the time of this engagement, Dimension Data had built up a solid track record with the energy supplier, having undertaken several network integration initiatives over a number of years.

The strength of the existing relationship, coupled with the fact that Dimension Data is a renowned leader not only in data centre environments but across a wide range of technology domains, made us the obvious choice of partner.

“Dimension Data’s Enterprise Architecture Consulting Service **delivers an information systems plan, that covers the business strategies and tactics** together with their **associated information requirements and strategies to address existing IT limitations.**”

Services Provided

With respect to its data centre, our initial engagement with the energy company was an entirely Services-centric one. Dimension Data’s Enterprise Architecture Consulting Service delivers an information systems plan, that covers the business strategies and tactics together with their associated information requirements and strategies to address existing IT limitations. The service is designed to capture an organisation’s strategic information needs, which in turn paves the way for Dimension Data to recommend strategies to integrate information critical for running an organisation’s business, growing it and transforming it. Once the information integration foundation is created, Dimension Data is in a position to define a roadmap to rationalise business applications (where applicable) which in turn provides guidelines to consolidate infrastructure resulting in cost reduction.

From the client’s point of view, business benefits of the engagement included the provision of a solid IT roadmap to enable business strategies, rapid identification of cost saving opportunities that can be realised by introducing new IT capabilities and the provision of direction and guidance for future investments.

So how did it all work? Our Consulting engagement involved a three-phased approach. First, as part of the Discovery phase, we undertook a thorough analysis of the energy company’s proposed strategy and roadmap. Information was gathered via a series of workshops, which expedited the data gathering process.

Next, we entered the Analysis and Documentation phase, which included the performance of a gap analysis, to identify all corporate and departmental information needs. Our approach included the identification of strengths, weaknesses,

opportunities and threats and centred on six key business metrics, i.e: Availability, Performance, Scalability, Accessibility, Maintainability and Recoverability. Finally, we entered the Recommendations phase where we presented our results and prioritised remediation actions. The final report ran to over 170 pages in length.

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Value Derived

Informed technology decision-making

Technology can and should be a major enabler of business agility and competitive advantage. Getting a firm grasp of the business impact and risk implications associated with one’s IT assets is essential for successfully aligning the IT environment to business objectives and positioning future technology investment in the context of the organisation as a whole.

Like many of our clients, the energy company lacked the internal resources and tools required to gather the information it needed to make informed strategic decisions concerning its IT architecture and processes.

“Without expert assistance, a certain amount of guesswork was involved in the initial plans. Through our enterprise architecture consulting service, we worked with the energy company to undertake a critical evaluation of its proposed IT roadmap and cost reduction plan in order to validate its direction. Essentially, it was all about helping the client to avoid making major technology decisions ‘in the dark,’” notes Cottingham.

Best practice alignment

As part of its consulting services, Dimension Data leverages the power of recognised industry best practice process frameworks such as ITIL, CoBIT and Six Sigma. In its report, Dimension Data presented a strategy based on best practices, around the various switching technologies available to connect all data centre equipment. From a virtualisation perspective, our recommendations drew on our knowledge and expertise around desktop virtualisation best practice and how virtualisation impacts data centre infrastructure and operations.

Constructive and open dialogue

Our consulting engagement with the energy company delivered a truly win-win outcome, thanks to the sound relationships that Dimension Data established upfront with the company’s management as well as members of the IT team.

“The feedback and reporting process included a technical presentation to staff as well as a session with the company’s senior executives. The fact that a relationship of trust and respect had been established upfront meant that the consulting exercise was not perceived as a threat or intrusion and our recommendations were received without criticism. This provided a platform for constructive and open dialogue between our respective teams, which ensured that the plans to evolve the company’s data centre could be quickly and easily validated and, where necessary, improved upon,” concludes Cottingham.