

Partner Programme Accelerates Design Phase for Building Society's IT Infrastructure

Norwich & Peterborough

industry:

Financial Services

country:

United Kingdom

business challenge:

To provide the board of executives with documentation to justify a server virtualisation project that also adheres to compliance regulations

solution:

Creating an architecture plan in accordance with the Microsoft Services Ready Programme to show return on investment for a virtualised server environment

services:

Planning services for the Microsoft environment

results:

- Strategic planning helps to ensure return on investment for the virtualized environment, increased security and compliancy with regulations
- Participation in the Microsoft Services Ready Programme enables the successful adoption, deployment, and use of Microsoft solutions and technologies

Executive Summary

When Norwich & Peterborough Building Society needed to **update its central IT infrastructure**, the company reviewed proposals from several technology providers before choosing a solution suggested by Microsoft Gold Certified Partner Dimension Data. Using the Microsoft Services Ready Programme, **Dimension Data recommended a Microsoft Virtual Server environment**, based on the Windows Server 2008 R2 operating system, to provide the data security and business continuity required by financial organisations. **With expert advice, the infrastructure was designed and approved by the building society's Executive Committee.**

Business Challenge

Norwich & Peterborough Building Society was formed in 1986 by the merger of two building societies dating back to 1860. With branches in East Anglia, United Kingdom (U.K.), and Gibraltar, the company's commitment to customer service is clear. In fact, it was awarded Best Building Society of 2009/2010 in the U.K. Personal Finance Awards.

As part of its commitment to customer satisfaction, Norwich & Peterborough wanted to enhance its IT infrastructure to support business continuity. This is especially important for its online banking customers who expect round-the-clock access to their account information. The company also wanted to revise its

approach to secure storage of backup data, by ensuring that unencrypted backup data is transmitted electronically, rather than being physically moved off site.

The company's central IT infrastructure was running on 80 servers maintained at the head office in Peterborough.

Andrew Winkless, Systems Architect at Norwich & Peterborough Building Society, says,

"We needed to look at our infrastructure. Some of our servers were several years old and weren't performing well. They were using up space and power that could be better used elsewhere."

Winkless was eager to take advantage of virtualisation technology to improve the company's server environment and address the challenges around server performance and reliability. But, before approving such a vital implementation, he needed to provide the building society's executive management with careful documentation showing the architecture design and return on investment. He consulted several vendors for advice about a potential solution, but chose to work with Microsoft Gold Certified Partner Dimension Data.

Solution

As a long-standing provider of services to Norwich & Peterborough, Dimension Data already had a strong working relationship with the company and understood the need to create a business case for a virtualisation solution.

Winkless says, "We wanted a detailed design document that we knew would cover every nut, bolt, and requirement. We chose to work with Dimension Data because we were confident it could deliver that."

“This is our **first large-scale Hyper-V engagement** so we’re very fortunate that we were **able to participate in Services Ready training and access the resources provided by Microsoft.**”

Dan Frost, Lead Consultant, Virtualisation, Dimension Data

Dimension Data recommended that Norwich & Peterborough replace its existing server estate with a virtualised server environment based on Windows Server 2008 R2 with Hyper-V. This would mean reducing 80 physical servers with nine that could hold many more virtual servers. As one of the first Microsoft partners to participate in the Microsoft Services Ready Programme, Dimension Data was able to access information developed by subject-matter experts at Microsoft Services. This expertise was incorporated into the architecture document and the return on investment presentation that Dimension Data created for the Executive Committee at Norwich & Peterborough.

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Andrew Winkless, Systems Architect, Norwich & Peterborough Building Society

Dan Frost, Lead Consultant, Virtualisation, at Dimension Data, says.

“This is our first large-scale Hyper-V engagement so we’re very fortunate that we were able to participate in Services Ready training and access the resources provided by Microsoft. We used Services Ready collateral to do the design work, and then the design was ratified by a Microsoft Services consultant through the Services Ready programme.”

“To be able to tell our clients that our designs are ratified by Microsoft gives us that extra edge that’s important in a competitive situation,” says Frost.

“It gives them a lot more confidence in our ability to deliver the best solution possible.”

Ultimately, the Services Ready methodology cut three months off the project’s design phase.

Benefits

Norwich & Peterborough needed a reliable cost-effective replacement of its existing IT infrastructure that would grow with future demands. By participating in the Microsoft Services Ready Programme, Dimension Data had access to expert tools, and the right to use the same methodologies and documentation that Microsoft uses. This helped it provide the best possible solution documentation - from design to implementation.

Up-to-Date Information Improves Service Offering

In addition to maintaining the skills of its consultants every time a technology changes, Dimension Data also has to change the collateral associated with that technology. As part of the Services Ready Programme, Microsoft maintains this collateral so partners don’t have to.

“It saves us a lot of time and effort,” says Frost. “For example, if I’m giving a presentation on a specific function of Hyper-V, I don’t have to research that information and create a presentation. The material’s already there. It also means that we’re always giving the right message about the latest updates of Microsoft technology.”

Services Ready Accelerates Time to Market

While Dimension Data has a great deal of expertise in virtualisation, Hyper-V is a rapidly maturing technology. “Without Services Ready, we would have to invest a lot of time and resources developing intellectual property on virtualisation,” says Frost. “Instead, we were able to apply our Services Ready offering to the project.”

“Because it was the first time we worked on a large-scale Hyper-V migration, Services Ready helped us to complete that project on time and within budget using tried and tested methodology and design techniques. It probably saved us around three months in terms of the time it would normally take to learn the technology and get up to speed,” says Frost.

Virtualisation Improves Business Continuity

In the financial sector, it’s good customer service to ensure that critical business functions are available at all times—but these functions are also regulated by the Financial Services Authority (FSA).

“Virtualisation will give us a stable environment, improving the resilience of practically every service we provide,” says Winkless. “If a server fails, instead of taking 18 hours to get it up and running, it could take less than an hour.”

Optimised Environment Increases Financial Resources

When the FSA ruled that backup media should not be physically moved off site, executive managers at Norwich & Peterborough were keen to act. After researching backup and disaster recovery solutions, Winkless and his team decided that a storage area network that connects to the servers and backs up data continuously would be the best solution. To pay for this expensive technology, they needed a way to trim costs elsewhere.

When Dimension Data recommended virtualisation, Winkless and his team realised that it was the ideal way to get the complete solution.

“Implementing a virtualised server environment will give us far greater business continuity and return on investment,” says Winkless. “We won’t have to buy a physical server every time we want to provide a new service so we save money and will be able to provide more services in the future. Plus, it’s a simpler, more cost-effective infrastructure to manage and back up.”

Electronic Transfers Increase Security

Data security measures are critical in the financial sector. Banks and building societies must be able to protect, securely share, and back up financial data across the business, while still giving customers anytime, anywhere access to their own account information. Privacy of information is important, as is the ability to protect important records in case of disaster.

Electronic transfers are a key part of ensuring the integrity and confidentiality of information, removing the need to transport tapes from one site to another.

“This was the main driver for the project,” says Winkless. “We were eager to implement it as soon as possible.”

Microsoft Services

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