Hitachi Storage Solutions at Work

Kennedys

INDUSTRY: Legal

SOLUTIONS: Business Continuity/Disaster Recovery

Hardware — Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage 1000 systems (2)

“Working alongside Hitachi partner Intercept, we’ve successfully overhauled our core IT infrastructure. Not only that, but we’ve done it without disruption to our employees and clients, we’ve done it to budget and we’ve done it to deadline.”

Ian Lauwerys
IT Director
Kennedys

Kennedys
Legal advice in black and white

Hitachi Data Systems
IT Director at Kennedys, Ian Lauwerys, elaborates: “Some of the court cases we handle have tens or even hundreds of millions of pounds resting on them. Consequently, it’s imperative our legal experts have fast and reliable access to key documents and information wherever and whenever they need them. We simply cannot tolerate system outages that impact on information delivery.”

He continues: “As a firm, we’ve always been early adopters of technology. For instance, when we opened a new office in Sydney a couple of years ago we used virtualisation technology for a fast rollout of our IT infrastructure. However, there was no denying that our onsite data centre and remote backup site were reaching their limits in terms of capacity, performance and reliability. It made a lot of sense to refresh our storage and server platforms as part of the relocation project.”

Kennedys was also keen to bring its disaster recovery strategy in house. The firm was carrying out backups using a managed backup service to a remote data centre, which, while effective, was extremely costly.

Evaluating the Options
Lauwerys and the IT department began a thorough evaluation process to select an IT partner to help them with the relocation of the IT infrastructure. After much analysis, the team selected Intercept, a company which specialises in delivering virtual IT infrastructures and which already had a strong track record in successfully delivering IT services to Kennedys — including the Sydney office virtualisation project.

“There were many reasons for choosing Intercept, over and above their track record with us,” explains Lauwerys. “Ultimately, they proposed the most compelling data centre and disaster recovery solutions, both of which were underpinned with Hitachi storage.”

Kennedys placed great importance on the storage element of the total solution, so Lauwerys’ team spent months independently evaluating various storage vendors. It was essential the chosen storage solution could...
We looked at all the big storage vendors, IBM, NetApp and EMC, for example, but Hitachi Data Systems emerged as the clear winner time and time again,” explains Lauwerys. “It was reassuring for us that Intercept was a partner of Hitachi Data Systems and that Hitachi was its storage provider of choice.”

The Deployment Begins...
Locating a data centre at Kennedys’ new headquarters in the heart of London’s financial district would have been expensive, so the firm decided to base its central IT infrastructure offsite in two data centres, one acting as the primary site, the other as a disaster recovery site.

Together, IT staff at Kennedys and Intercept consultants deployed seven HP ProLiant servers running VMware in the new data centres — an impressive consolidation from the previous 40 servers. Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage 1000 systems were also installed at each site, providing enterprise-class storage. The migration from the legacy infrastructure to the new virtualised environment went extremely smoothly, with no disruption or interruption of service experienced by Kennedys’ 600+ staff.

The Benefits Roll In
After just a few months in the new headquarters, Kennedys was already reaping huge benefits. With the new Hitachi-based storage area network, the average backup window has been halved. Explains Lauwerys: “The volume of data we need to back up is growing exponentially, but we have to do it for business continuity reasons. In the past, we’ve been worried about backups disrupting other IT systems and application delivery, but with the Hitachi solution in place, we have plenty of capacity and performance.”

Kennedys estimates that its new disaster recovery strategy alone is saving it £200,000 each year. With the latest solution, a Hitachi Adaptable Modular Storage 1000 system at the disaster recovery site holds a mirrored copy of all the data (such as legal documents, databases, files and e-mails) stored at the primary site. The frequency with which data is replicated is determined by the importance of the business application — financial information, for example, is copied hourly. “With the disaster recovery plan that Intercept developed and put in place, we’re better protected and at a fraction of the cost,” says Lauwerys.

The benefits of the virtualised server environment are also clear to see. By significantly reducing its pool of physical servers, Kennedys is saving money at the new data centres through reduced power consumption, cooling requirements and floor space. Furthermore, the virtualised server environment is far simpler to manage and provides maximum resiliency, resulting in highly available applications. Relying on Hitachi as an established leader in storage virtualisation, Kennedys expects to leverage this expertise in the near future, as its infrastructure becomes increasingly virtualised.

“Once again, the experience of working with Intercept has been a success from start to finish,” says Lauwerys. “They have provided excellent consultancy and have strived to transfer as much of their knowledge and skills as possible. This really empowers my team and enables Kennedys to take our infrastructure to the next level.”