

PD Hook fit for the future with IBM Blade technology

Overview

Customer challenge

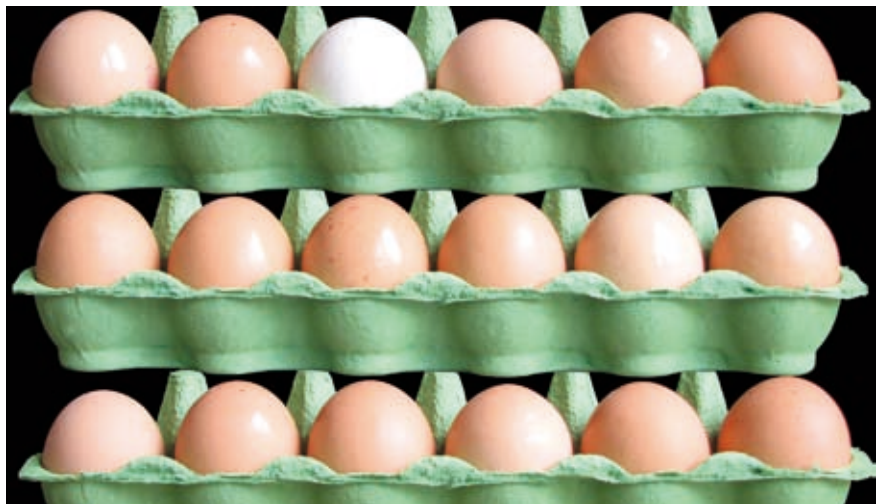
To replace an aging infrastructure that was no longer cost-effective to maintain and to improve system response times for users.

Solution

PD Hook now supports its business processes with a reliable, responsive infrastructure based on IBM Blade technology. The solution is scalable and flexible enough to sustain PD Hooks' business.

Customer benefits

- Substantial improvement in system performance and, therefore, user productivity – processing time for one function reduced from 7 minutes to 50 seconds
- Lower cost of systems management, support and maintenance
- Scalable, flexible solution to meet future needs
- Reduction in floor space required for servers
- Cost-effective, flexible financing.



A family owned business, PD Hook is a major supplier of agricultural solutions to the UK Poultry Industry and the retail sector. Founded in the 1950s, PD Hook (Hatcheries) now has the capacity to hatch more than 5 million chicks a week. Around 650 people are employed across the group.

The IT infrastructure on which PD Hook depended for a whole range of business activities was aging and becoming uneconomic to maintain. With around 75 people logging in to the main servers on a regular basis and another 10 using them occasionally, system response times were sometimes poor. This not only caused user frustration, it also impacted productivity. Furthermore, as the company has grown, the small space set aside for the data centre began to overflow into other office areas.

“I like the way that IBM works. The people I’ve dealt with are very knowledgeable in their own right but also have access to a breadth and depth of experience within IBM that helps them get right to the heart of your requirements. And once you’ve found the correct solution you can go through your normal supply channel to buy it.”

– Nigel Boyle, Technical Director at PD Hook

With further growth predicted, PD Hook required a reliable, responsive infrastructure that was scalable and flexible enough to support the business into the future.

Speed and resilience

The need for a major replacement programme presented PD Hook with a perfect opportunity to survey the market for the best options. Nigel Boyle, Administration and Technical Director at PD Hook says: "One of the things that impressed us most about the IBM Blade technology was the high speed of connectivity between the servers and the hard disks within the system. The redundancy within the Blade servers – and therefore their reliability – was also much greater than in competitors' servers. In the end IBM was a very clear choice for us."

PD Hook's new infrastructure is based on seven IBM Blade servers. The structure allows for expansion of up to 14 servers without any architecture change.

Requirement focused

IBM worked with PD Hooks' existing IT supplier to devise and then implement the best solution. "I like the way that IBM works," says Boyle. "The people I've dealt with are very knowledgeable in their own right but also have access to a breadth and depth of experience within IBM that helps them get right to the heart of your requirements. And once you've found the correct solution you can go through your normal supply channel to buy it."

IBM arranged the physical installation of the new infrastructure, following which the implementation was completed by the supplier.

Although competitively priced, the solution represented an investment for PD Hook so a financing deal from IBM Global Financing was used to help fund the purchase. All of the IBM Blade technology was included in the deal along with a number of non-IBM terminals. Boyle says: "I was surprised that IBM Global Financing was happy to finance non-IBM hardware. The deal was competitive with that of the mainstream banking sector and the flexibility of being able to include any make of hardware and software made it right, not only for now, but also to keep as an open line of credit for future investments."

Productivity and savings

Since implementing the new infrastructure, PD Hook is really seeing the benefit of improved system response times and user productivity. For example, a regularly accessed spreadsheet is macro driven and opens and closes around 23 further spreadsheets to make required calculations. On the old system that would take around 7 minutes, now it takes approximately 50 seconds.

System management, support and maintenance costs are also down. The use of IBM Director has delivered a set of platform management tools that help optimise system availability and reduce IT costs.

IBM Blade servers are known to reduce energy consumption within data centres. However, Boyle explains: “We haven’t actually been able to quantify energy savings as we don’t meter the system separately. I’m sure we are saving energy but I can’t give exact figures at the moment.”

One benefit that is very obvious is the space saved by the new IBM BladeCenter® chassis. It’s far more compact than a conventional server system so the data centre is no longer encroaching on space belonging to other business areas.

“I’m sold on IBM Blade technology,” says Boyle. “We have a remote server farm in Scunthorpe and when that is ready for renewal I would like to put an IBM BladeCenter S chassis in there – IBM Blade technology is just so much easier to work with.”

Revolutionary potential

Perhaps the most valuable benefit of PD Hook’s new solution is that it provides a scalable, flexible infrastructure for the future.

“Now we’ve got a powerful, adaptable platform in place I can see the potential for all sorts of efficiency improvements. We’re considering using WebSphere Portal to automate and streamline our purchase order processing, for example. It could also be used to integrate all of our, currently disparate, software systems, streamlining our processes throughout the business. We already use Lotus

Notes so could implement strategic, portal-based dashboards detailing KPIs for each user group. I can see a great opportunity to revolutionize the value we extract from our business information,” concludes Boyle.

For more information

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SMC03024-GBEN-00