

Customer Success Story

LAWRENCE GRAHAM, LAWYERS

LG selects Virtustream to optimise their virtual server environment.

About the Business:

LG is one of the UK's top 50 internationally focused firms of commercial business lawyers, advising clients and providing practical solutions for services such as capital raising, real estate, risk and regulation. LG's head office is in London and has a strong international reach and understanding of the world's legal jurisdictions with further offices located in Dubai and Monaco.

LG differentiate themselves as a team who are classified as not just commercially-minded lawyers, but practitioners that are entrepreneurial and results-driven, demonstrating a deep understanding of their clients' businesses and the industries they work within. Specialist industry sectors include banking, financial services, hospitality & leisure, insurance, real estate and wealth planning. Clients include multinational corporations, international banks, financial institutions, and wealthy individuals.

The company employs 500 staff and 85 partners worldwide.

Leading the supporting IT team is Jason Petrucci, IT Director, LG. In such a data intensive environment (with each case involving literally thousands of associated documents and files), constant accessibility and robust availability of applications and data is a pre-requisite.

The IT Team at LG had commenced the virtualisation route six months prior to Jason's arrival, convinced that virtualisation could provide them with the secure yet flexible framework they were seeking; and so began the process of server virtualisation. However the project was falling short of its projected installation timelines as staff struggled to transition and provision the virtual servers. Jason's arrival, together with a move to new premises, prompted a full back to the drawing board approach. This process started with the identification and appointment of a key virtualisation partner to advise on the re-invigoration and optimisation of the entire virtual estate.

Identifying the correct Virtualisation Partner to address the issues:

Jason was first introduced to the Virtustream team back in Autumn 2006 at the IT Directors Forum whilst at a previous company. The impression they made while discussing their experiences of taking part-virtualised environments to the next level of usability and flexibility was obviously sound, as Jason recalled them when he moved across to LG.

One of Jason's first responsibilities at LG was to analyse their present virtualised blade server and SAN storage environment. The analysis was thorough and formed a distinct business case that illustrated immediate areas of concern. Through the analysis it was immediately visible that the timeframe to complete the transition from physical to virtual was unacceptable. In addition, the part virtualised environment was not as stable or reliable as the company would have liked with outages common and downtime an issue. And although on the face of it secure, the analysis revealed that without a concrete DR policy, servers, applications and the storage were potentially susceptible.

In short, internal business confidence had stalled for virtualisation and it needed a fresh approach delivered from a trusted source to take LG down the virtualisation route.

The Virtustream Approach:

In 2007, following in-depth briefing and knowledge exchange, Virtustream began work mapping out an ideal virtualised system environmental design and implementation to regenerate and robustly revive the virtualised platform into the second stage of virtualisation of the entire estate. The start point was a Virtualisation Environmental Design Initiative (VEDI) to help LG quantify the cost both to wallet and planet of the present design versus the cost of a well-oiled virtualised system. This thorough planning analysis tool not only highlighted the environmental savings by examining the present natural resource consumption and carbon impact, but also practically equated these considerations into a demonstrable reduction into LG's utility consumption and costs. The resultant VEDI models provided the cradle-to-grave proof in both £ savings and CO2 reduction and illustrated completely how they could fully address the issues through the use of virtualisation and consolidation.

Technical recommendations/solutions

The business justifications to progress with virtualising the entire estate were compelling. Firstly, a move to new premises was a driver and start point to avoid physical relocation of surplus servers. Secondly the system had to become stable and reliable with inherent disaster recovery. In addition, the amount of hardware and the cost of ownership needed to be driven down from the 80+ servers in existence. Lastly, the time to provision new servers needed to be reduced and capacity needed to be increased. With these requirements, Jason called upon Virtustream to impart the knowledge and appropriate solutions and to inject enthusiasm to support the business objectives. Previous experiences sourcing virtualisation from other partners had left the team lacking in confidence; frequently asking LG for their wish list and then presenting them back with a ‘one-size fits all’ technology solution. Virtustream’s specialist ability to take an invigorating overhaul of the entire infrastructure was the refreshing approach the company was seeking.

Virtustream were also appointed to provide the support for the entire environment.

Technical Specification:

The team proposed a full, encompassing solution. In production, the team agreed on an HP 8000 EVA, running 12 blade and 13 VMware ESX 3.01 servers; with Virtual Centre v2.5 for the monitoring of the 20 virtual machines. For disaster recovery, a HP 4000 EVA was recommended with 6 blade and 6 VMware ESX 3.01 servers across 20 virtual machines.

Results:

Currently 80% of the environment is virtualised, with LG enjoying lower costs through reducing their investments in hardware. True clustering is now achieved over both live and Disaster Recovery sites and the team is pleased with the ease of management virtualisation brings. Jason commented. “There are some other tangible results that we have seen – Disaster Recovery is now guaranteed, and new applications can be easily added without downtime. Now when we consider new systems, as a rule of thumb we explore if they can be virtualised before we will adopt them.”

With the new optimised virtualised system and support from Virtustream, the previously volatile Exchange, Filesite and SharePoint environments have stabilised.

In terms of demonstrable results from Virtustream’s VEDI, the resulting full process models allowed LG to strive towards full certification of ISO 14001 by the end of 2008 and of course, the company is pleased to be demonstrating lower CO₂ emissions. Remote access is now secured via Citrix.

For the future, LG are looking at Virtual Desktop Infrastructure (VDI) and virtualised SANs and will continue to work hand-in-hand with Virtustream to enhance optimal implementation and support capabilities.

“With Virtustream we really believe they have understood our business and technology needs and have sympathetically, but expertly, provided services to address. It really is an ongoing strategic partnership.” Jason concludes.

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