

Hounslow transforms storage with Tectrade and IBM



Overview

■ **Challenge**

Government targets for freedom of information mean local government is faced with ever-increasing data volumes; Hounslow needed to consolidate its disparate storage systems to reduce administrative costs and provide a scalable environment for the future

■ **Solution**

Hounslow commissioned Tectrade to implement a SAN based around an IBM System Storage DS8100 storage system and to extend the existing IBM Tivoli Storage Manager architecture, creating a more scalable storage infrastructure with a single point of control

■ **Key Benefits**

Single, easy to use interface enables global view of storage, potentially saving skilled IT staff as much as six man-hours per day; up to 50 per cent reduction in payroll processing times; file copying up to 40 per cent faster; backups no longer impact production systems; solution can be expanded with minimal service disruption and at low cost

The London Borough of Hounslow in West London, UK, provides local government and community services for over 200,000 people. As a public authority, Hounslow is required by the Freedom of Information Act, which came into effect in 2005, to make information available to the public on request. The need to comply with this legislation, combined with the rising IT demands of many of the Borough's other services, means that Hounslow's data storage requirements will increase by an estimated 2TB every year.

The borough wished to find a way to deal with these increased demands while demonstrating a high level of control over public finances. Hounslow's existing storage architecture relied on disparate, direct-attached storage systems for its Windows and UNIX platforms, which had to be maintained manually using a number of different interfaces. There were concerns that data was not being managed efficiently, and it was difficult to obtain a global view of the Borough's storage requirements to see how the situation could be improved.

“We wanted to make our storage infrastructure more responsive, both to business demands and to government requirements,” says Andy Grogan, Infrastructure Support Manager, Customer Services and Modernisation at Hounslow. “The Freedom of Information Act has created greater demand for storage capacity, and we needed a new platform that could grow to meet Hounslow’s information needs.”

Enterprise-class storage

Hounslow consulted Tectrade, one of IBM’s leading Business Partners for storage in the UK, to find a solution. Tectrade proposed a solution based around a Storage Area Network (SAN) with two IBM System Storage DS8100 storage systems, and an expansion of the existing IBM 3584 tape library and Tivoli Storage Manager solution.

“Tectrade’s proposal beat the competition in terms of both price and quality. Another key factor in our decision was Tectrade’s past experience – we visited several reference sites, both public and private-sector, and got a very good impression,” comments Andy Grogan. “The Tectrade team was highly professional, and very open to feedback. They successfully delivered on-budget even though the specification was changed during the project.”

The DS8100 systems give Hounslow enterprise-class performance and reliability, and will handle the storage needs of both UNIX and Windows platforms, managed through a single interface.

“The DS8100 solution makes administration much more straightforward,” says Andy Grogan. “Before, we had around ten different interfaces to deal with, so maintenance was complicated and labour-intensive. Now, because our IT staff don’t have to manage direct-attached storage devices separately, each of them saves two to three hours per day.”

The single interface also makes it easier for Hounslow to get a global view of its storage needs, and to plan for the future. As data volumes rise, the capacity of the DS8100 systems can be scaled up by adding more disks, without causing disruption to the Borough’s services. With the centralised DS8100 solution, Hounslow can also achieve much better utilisation of the available storage resources, and is no longer constrained by the physical capacity limitations of the per-server storage model.

Better response times, lower costs

Moving to a higher performance storage infrastructure has paid dividends for Hounslow by noticeably

improving response times. As Andy Grogan comments, “The large SQL Server database running on one of our Windows systems really benefits from the new solution – transactions have speeded up by as much as 30 per cent, and copying files is up to 40 per cent faster. We process 14 payrolls twice weekly on our IBM System p5 server, and they now run in half the time previously taken.”

“The real cost reductions have been in administration and maintenance,” he adds. “A saving of two or three hours per day for each of the IT staff involved frees them up to focus on improving other areas of Hounslow’s IT services.”

The solution’s single point of management enables Hounslow to assess its data handling and storage capacity more accurately, while the scalable architecture of the DS8100 means the Borough can respond cost-effectively to increasing demands.

“With the IBM solution, we can be proactive, not reactive,” concludes Andy Grogan. “The DS8100 provides a reliable, high-performance storage platform that will support Hounslow’s information needs both now and in the future.”

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IBM United Kingdom Limited
PO Box 41
North Harbour
Portsmouth
Hampshire
PO6 3AU

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