Case study

Emap Limited

Meeting fixed deadline makes sure transition processes

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Chris Taylor
CIO
Emap Limited

BT works hand-in-hand with Emap as outsourcing strategy assures the success of fundamental shift in business direction

Client

Following a strategic review, Emap plc decided to focus squarely on business-to-business media. It sold its consumer magazines and consumer radio businesses – together with its in-house shared services operation – to Bauer.

The newly independent company became Emap Limited, having been bought by a consortium and de-listed from the stock market. Under the sale agreement, Bauer would temporarily provide IT services to Emap Limited. However, new systems and networks would be needed inside just 10 months. An outsourcing strategy, to include other non-core services, was the ideal solution.

Challenge

A discovery exercise was necessary as a precursor to the production of a request for proposal (RFP) for the outsourcing contract. Chris Taylor, CIO at Emap Limited, takes up the story: "We needed to know what was out there, what could be transitioned and how quickly, and what we would need to build from scratch. That had to be done against a future-state business-as-usual model being developed."

Its acknowledged M&A expertise and its position as an existing supplier made BT an obvious choice to conduct that detective work. Calling for close co-operation between the two companies, it was undertaken as a professional services engagement. The technical challenges were to establish a current environment baseline together with a target estate including architecture, capacity, and connectivity models.

Judith Halkerston, Managing Director for UK Commercial Customers in BT Global Services, explains: "The migration strategy would need to minimise the impact on Emap lines of business – allowing them to continue producing, publishing, meeting their workloads, and hitting their deadlines, throughout any transitional activity."

Solution

The discovery exercise was assisted by the strategic consultancy arm of BT Engage IT, and was instrumental in getting Emap ahead of a fast-moving game. Chris Taylor recalls: "The performance of the BT Engage IT team was very impressive. The discovery exercise was thorough, well executed, and completed on schedule."

The BT differentiators

- Long experience of outsourcing contract delivery and governance in both public sector and private sector organisations
- Established and proven business models for discovery and migration models covering, for example, critical business applications
- Quality Assurance teams ensure delivery against fixed transition and service provision deadlines
- ITIL-based service management systems and processes with industry leading SLAs around-the-clock

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Following the discovery exercise, an RFP was issued for outsourcing of twin data centres, application hosting, end-to-end managed wide area and local area network services, desktop support, and full overall service management. KPMG managed the competitive tender, which was won by BT.

Commenting on that choice, Chris Taylor says: "As an existing supplier to Emap we knew that BT had the global reach we were looking for. But strength and scale of resources were equally important in such a complex project."

Initially, the BT Application Migration model was used to rate Emap applications in terms of complexity and transition needs, enabling them to be grouped into so-called migration conveyors. Three high level streams were identified:

- Microsoft Active Directory, Microsoft Exchange email, and proxy services
- Specific line-of-business applications
- Server-centric activities such as FTP and development server environments

The activities were then programmed into an overall transition plan, allowing operational teams within BT Global Services and BT Engage IT to forward plan for a high intensity testing and acceptance schedule. A capacity model of future state performance, configuration, and operational rules was built. This allowed optimum scaling to assure minimum overheads and more effective pricing.

BT would manage commodity applications such as Microsoft, while an in-house Emap team would support the line-of-business applications. An assurance framework provided confirmation to the in-life support teams for the mixed BT and Emap application platforms that the systems were ready for acceptance.

"A framework focused on performance, integration, and technical management was agreed to ensure that operational teams were confident that the applications were fit for purpose," confirms Judith Halkerston. "That process included agreed documentation and knowledge transfer workshops."

Not everything was plain sailing. About four months into the process things were not going to plan. "Any complex transition will have its problems. This was no exception and things began to run behind against our hard stop delivery date," says Chris Taylor. "However, the Quality Assurance team that BT put on the case was superb. Things were re-prioritised to ensure the drop dead cut off deadline was hit, which vindicated our faith in BT."

Now dual BT data centres in London and Croydon provide production and disaster recover (DR) facilities offering 100 virtual servers and dedicated storage. In a cost effective architecture, live service delivery is shared between them. Data replication means that either data centre is capable of taking the full load if necessary, but the enormous costs of 100 per cent redundancy are avoided.

A BT MPLS WAN interconnects Emap nodes in London, Croydon, Leeds, Bournemouth, Frankfurt, Dubai, India, and the US. Services between the data centres and the Emap headquarters in North London run at up to 1Gbps. Cisco-based LANs are supported throughout, with a mixed desktop and mobile estate of around 1,600 laptops, PCs, and Apple Macs. BT also supports legacy voice communications systems in London, Bournemouth, and Leeds while a study is being conducted into the future Emap telephony roadmap.

Value

The transition was completed just before the deadline. "As well as maintaining our online presence, we need to sell magazines and advertising. Being the first to run a news story or a topical opinion piece is crucial to that," says Chris Taylor, "so our BT services are vital."

The service management environment comprises a single point of contact first line service desk operated by BT Engage IT. Located in Chesterfield, this is available 24*7*365. It has direct links into third party service desks, Emap in-house services for line-of-business applications, and BT second and third line service desks. It also handles problem, incident and change management for the in-life service.

ITIL-based systems and processes ensure trouble tickets and service requests are acted upon within agreed SLAs (around-the-clock four-hour fix in the case of priority incidents at the data centres and the Emap London HQ). In addition, BT onsite engineers support the Emap people at those locations.

Having completed the transition process, Emap is now firmly into transformation territory. "It's impossible to measure how much we're saving as there's no previous environment to compare things against," concludes Chris Taylor, "but the BT outsourced infrastructure means that we now have the scale and reach to quickly assimilate acquisitions in the UK or abroad."

Core BT services

- Outsourcing contract covering twin data centres, application hosting, end-to-end managed wide area and local area network services, desktop support
- Full overall service management delivered by BT Engage IT

Offices worldwide

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