

POSITIVE THINKING

Richard Jenkins of RF Code highlights the importance of taking a proactive approach with your infrastructure management.

T rue infrastructure management is a combination of real time asset visibility, environmental monitoring, facilities management and operational planning.

A single errant asset or environmental concern can drastically affect a facility's profitability and longevity, so it is critical the data centre is intelligently monitored to ensure optimally running systems, efficient cost control and corporate sustainability.

Missing assets, unreliable infrastructure, reduced availability, uncontrollable expenditure or an unwieldy environment – these outcomes quickly occur through fragmented infrastructure management.

The data centre must become a profit generator, not a hindrance, which is why senior management is only interested in a single outcome – how can the data centre return profit to the company's bottom line? They are rarely concerned with the how; rather the when.

Avoiding disaster situations

At current data growth rates, the data centre is primed to become both an indispensable corporate asset and huge expense.

ICT and facilities must come together. Implementing a 360°, real time overview will result in power and environmental efficiency improvements, effective

capacity planning and real money back on the bottom line.

Intelligent infrastructure management should drive operational overhaul, whichever stage of maturity a facility is at - retrofitting older data centres to increase capacity and cut environmental inefficiencies for example.

For new builds, a complete thermal overview stops poorly maintained environmental conditions impacting availability and asset lifespan. Airflow, blockages, leaks; these can have an unrecoverable impact on a facility and infrastructure management creates a preferred culture of disaster avoidance rather than disaster recovery.

Environmental overhaul

The vast amount of energy generated by ever expanding equipment farms is putting further pressures on the bottom line. Managing general asset health, their location in relation to their environmental output, and the long term total cost of ownership requires a unified approach – there is no alternative.

Keeping such a sensitive environment stable amid rising energy costs means efficient infrastructure is a business objective that refuses to dissipate.

Recent Emerson Network Power research highlighted that energy use and its related cooling is roughly 44 per cent of the total expenditure of an average data centre.

Consider the fact that between 2005 and 2010, energy usage for facilities rose 36 per cent (the 2000 – 2005 increase was an even more dramatic 200 per cent), and it becomes evident how data centre related strain can quickly become unsustainable financially.

Saving energy, reducing carbon emissions and prolonging asset lifespan are key challenges that need addressing now, not later.

Stop being so passive

Thankfully, senior management's desire for a more cost conscious data centre can be achieved with the correct solutions.

It begins with data itself. With real time insight flowing to your management team, you can begin overhauling operations and answer questions like:

- Is collocating assets providing the advantages promised?
- Is outsourcing data centre capacity necessary and sustainable?
- Will the EU's 2015 CO2 emission regulations be met?
- Is the bottom line healthier? Are resource costs lower?
- Is the data centre the scalable, automated asset it should be?

With a suitable management platform implemented, you can avoid the seemingly inescapable chain of costs and inefficiencies. Implementing smarter management controls also demonstrates

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to senior executives how the data centre is returning money to the bottom line. Accountability is only possible with real time data to support claims.

For the data centre manager themselves, the productivity advantages alone are worth pursuing. Other improvements include a more time/cost efficient audit process, greater asset accuracy, the ability to effectively plan around capacity demands, immediacy for when environmental issues arise and greater overall facility security.

The ideal solution is wireless, active RFID. Passive technology has its uses within certain sectors, but in the fast moving world of data centre planning and control, active monitoring solutions are the only option from a functionality, accountability and return on investment point of view.

Actively solving the puzzle

Interlinked environmental monitoring and asset management opens up a world of short term infrastructure forecasting and consolidation options, as well as clearer long term capacity utilisation.

Integrating with other DCIM solutions and business management platforms such as process control, warehouse management systems and other ERP software will also create a more rounded view of the entire IT ecosystem.

This is not achievable with a time consuming, instantly outdated system that runs passively. With that option, as soon as data is collected, it is effectively worthless. Moving assets creates confusion, human errors occur and collecting the data itself is extremely time consuming and costly. From a regulatory perspective, there is a greater chance of financial penalties due to infrastructure related ignorance.

Active solutions, once implemented (a process that is fast, easy and requires little training), have a long running



lifespan, deliver data instantly and create the desired return on investment at an impressive rate.

Case in point: IBM

- \$10,000 worth of energy related savings a year in a 25,000ft² data centre.
- Data centre inventory visibility increased from 72 per cent to 99.7 per cent.
- Automated tracking reduced reconciliation time by 80 per cent of lost assets.
- Locating time for audits, maintenance, etc – a 94 per cent reduction.

Other examples include HP's 27 per cent improvement in cooling efficiency and CME Group's ROI in under 12 months through integrated asset tracking and environmental control.

The more managers familiarise themselves with internal infrastructure

trends, the faster it will be to increase savings, guarantee regulatory compliance, and ensure data and personnel security.

Shareholders are demanding enterprises maintain digital competitiveness. This is only fully attainable with a companywide understanding of the data it possesses and the environment it is housed in. Creating a competitive enterprise that can react to market developments begins in the data centre.

If left to its own devices, the facility will spiral out of control. Like every aspect of IT, effective management is everything, especially when dealing with profitability and competitive utilisation. The sooner you transform your facility into an automated, scalable and accountable asset, the quicker revenue growth will occur.

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September 18, 2013

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