



A VOHKUS DATA CENTRE SOLUTION

AT THE CUTTING EDGE FOR IT INFRASTRUCTURE



ERP infrastructure and storage for retail wholesaler and distributor professional hair and beauty products

Vohkus services:

Service design, procurement, implementation and project management

Technologies used:

Data centre: Servers
Data centre: Storage

Industry:

Retail and Distribution

Business drivers:

Cost
Quality of service

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When this UK business needed to upgrade its ERP infrastructure, Vohkus ratified, architected and deployed a highly-resilient and flexible solution.

CHALLENGES

- ▶ Create benchmark ‘template’ solution for rollout to global business.
- ▶ Reduce need for customisation of software and hardware.
- ▶ Manage end-of-life for existing AS400 system and boost resilience.

SOLUTIONS

- ▶ Independent solution design and ratification.
- ▶ Chief technical architect and project management.
- ▶ Rapid sourcing and deployment.

OUTCOMES

- ▶ Reduced data centre physical and carbon footprint.
- ▶ Futureproof, expandable solution to support 5-year growth plan.
- ▶ Improved resilience with new offsite DR capability.

"This project has spearheaded the way for a modern Dynamics rollout across our global business, and we're delighted with the contribution Vohkus has made to its success."

- Infrastructure Analyst

DATA CENTRE SOLUTIONS FROM VOHKUS

Vohkus combines extensive experience of architecting data centre solutions with in-depth technical knowledge of all relevant server, storage and networking components. We work with the world's leading vendors of server, storage, networking and related technologies.

We work with traditional, hybrid and cloud platforms, providing a common approach to project governance, and a thorough commercial and technical validation of each solution.

Our converged infrastructure and network solutions combine simplicity, security, governance and control with agility, performance and cost advantages.

We can even take on management of the entire infrastructure for you.

Situation

This client is the world's largest distributor of professional hair and beauty products. With around 260 stores it is by far the largest operator of its type in the UK and Ireland, where it operates four brands. The company was running an aging IBM AS400 system that was severely outdated and unable to scale effectively. As a progression path, Microsoft Dynamics AX had been rolled out to replace its point-of-sale (POS)/till functionality, but this implementation had been over-customised, creating difficulties for further progression paths and upgrading of the base application.

By upgrading to the most recent version of Dynamics, running on up-to-date technology, the client would be able to create an ERP solution that could integrate into the business and encompass all aspects of its operations. It was therefore vital to achieve the best possible infrastructure for the budget, so that the implementation could eventually supersede the existing POS system and form the core of a unified solution.

Vohkus had previously helped the client relocate its corporate headquarters, and had also helped close a number of data protection gaps. Because of the excellent trusted relationships between Vohkus staff and the client's technology team, Vohkus was asked to prepare infrastructure plans that would meet the software requirements specified by the client's software supplier, HSO. This required extensive dialogue, consultation and collaboration between HSO and Vohkus.

The client's UK IT infrastructure analyst noted that Vohkus's principle storage consultant and project manager "was a golden resource at this stage in making sure the specification would be successful."

Selecting and deploying the solution

A range of hardware options from different vendors was considered, and Vohkus's data centre solutions team (including a chief technical architect, specialist pre-sales consultant and technical lead) helped guide the client through from initial discussions around the project to deployment.

Vohkus independently reviewed all the server and storage technologies that fitted the bill, and would have been happy to build any of those solutions from a technical standpoint. In this case the customer selected a Dell option ultimately on the advice of its own global head of IT.

The client's infrastructure analyst explains more: "There were a number of attractions of the Dell system for us. The reduced data centre footprint required by Dell's PowerEdge FX converged modular architecture meant efficient use of space and ensured the solution would be easily scalable in future simply by adding more blades without needing additional racks, and everything could be managed from a single interface, simplifying administration. The FX units would be complemented by high performance all-flash Dell SC4020 Compellent storage arrays, which include enterprise features such as de-duplication, compression, quality of service, application integration and cross-site replication."

At the outset the client had expected to invest in a traditional server-based infrastructure with hybrid SSD/disk storage, but taking into account Vohkus's solution design and Dell's commercial terms it realised it could achieve a substantially higher performance ceiling using the proposed technology.

ABOUT VOHKUS

Vohkus delivers IT enabled business solutions and services, and is a trusted technology partner for both private and public sector clients, many of whom operate across the globe.

Our capability is end2end:
Consult >>> Design >>> Supply >>>
Deploy >>> Manage >>> Support

"An additional, and unexpected, benefit was that this would also enable Vohkus to build a complete replicated offsite DR facility – which the client hadn't had before – within the project budget," says the infrastructure analyst. The solution was designed to use two FX chassis at a site in Bracknell, which would provide immediate failover between production and non-production SQL and Hyper-V. A second site, in Blackburn, was selected for a duplicate configuration that would maintain offsite disaster recovery.

"Futureproofing's important to us, which is why Dell's approach to perpetual software licensing – whereby licenses can be repurposed in three years' time – was also attractive to us," says the infrastructure analyst. "The configuration chosen not only meets the business's recovery time objectives and recovery point objectives, but also makes it very easy to add more users."

"During the project Vohkus engaged with the client's IT team at several levels to ensure the transformation was completed with minimal disruption. Much of the integration work was overseen by Vohkus's project manager working alongside the infrastructure analyst, who noted: "It was vital to have a close relationship with the customer as everything happened very fast. For a project like this you might typically expect equipment to be delivered by the manufacturer in a month or so and for technical resource to become available a few weeks later. For this project the equipment was ready within days, and we worked around availability of Dell engineers to make sure the whole thing – from purchase order to commissioning – was completed within a very tight four-week timeframe."

The team configured the storage's de-duplication and compression features, and installed upgraded LAN and SAN switches to ensure performance would not be degraded by the network. "The old environment had 1GB networking, whereas we've installed a 10GB backbone to ensure the performance enhancements of the hardware translate into clear service improvements," says the project manager.

Conclusion

The client now has a greener, better performing and much more resilient ERP infrastructure platform, according to the client's infrastructure analyst. "Both Dell and ourselves appreciated and made the most of Vohkus's technical know-how. Vohkus has arranged for support governed by Dell going forward, and everything is readily expandable in support of our five-year 20 per cent year-on-year growth plans.

"Every part of this project, from supply to installation, got everyone enthused and keen to do a great job. We now have an integrated, robust and scalable platform for the future; it's great solution and one we have excellent faith in. "This project has spearheaded the way for a modern Dynamics rollout across our global business, and we're delighted with the contribution Vohkus has made to its success."