

VDI STORAGE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION FOR LEADERS CASE STUDY



Residential property group Leaders was growing fast, but its core system usability was increasingly suffering. Vohkus investigated what was causing service bottlenecks and architected a new NetApp storage solution to futureproof the infrastructure.

Situation

Leaders is one of the largest independent residential property groups in the UK, with over 120 branches specialising in lettings, sales, buy-to-let and investment finance. Part of Property Services Holdings (backed by Bowmark Capital LLP), it has grown by delivering an excellent local property service and by acquiring reputable businesses that extend its service to new towns and cities across the country.

Leaders relies on a virtual desktop infrastructure (VDI) supporting nearly 1,000 desktops, with up to 850 users connecting at the same time each morning. The login process was very slow – taking up to 15 minutes in some cases – and a similar problem arose when users logged off at the end of the day. System performance was clearly unacceptable, but there remained an imperative to connect ever greater numbers of users as the company grew; dozens more needed to be added at any one time whenever there was a new acquisition. Although the problem was apparent, the cause of the performance issue was not clear.

Leaders already had an excellent relationship with Vohkus and a high level of trust in the quality of its staff, and its consultants were invited to investigate what was going wrong.

Diagnosis and solution design

There were several elements contributing to connection delays, but Vohkus discovered that the main problem lay with the storage system. Leaders had been an early adopter of VDI, but its storage had not been designed to cope with the volume of simultaneous user logins that were now required. Performance had suffered accordingly.

The IT manager of Leaders, says, “Our storage had too many users on the platform. Despite the growth of the business, the IT infrastructure hadn’t kept pace so the servers on which the applications were running were struggling to cope.”

HEADQUARTERS SOUTHAMPTON 0345 647 3000
 SALES OFFICE LONDON 0345 647 3100
 SALES OFFICE HEATHROW 0345 647 3200

Vohkus services:

Storage consultancy, design and implementation

Business drivers:

Business agility / growth
 Cost
 Quality of service

Industry:

Property

Technology:

Network: Core Networking
 Data centre: Storage

Challenges

- Rapid growth through acquisition meant existing system unfit for purpose.
- Around 850 users were experiencing major delays logging in.
- IT threatened to constrain business growth.

Solutions

- Vohkus investigated potential bottlenecks and reasons for poor performance.
- Vohkus isolated main problems to storage system.
- Vohkus designed and implemented a new on-premises system using NetApp solid state technology.

Outcomes

- Enabled Leaders’ steep growth curve to continue without IT hindrance.
- Flexible solution, protected against obsolescence.
- Helped improve staff productivity by reducing system delays.

Having scoped the requirements for a replacement system, Vohkus recommended that Leaders invest in a new NetApp solution using solid state/flash drives. In recent years the cost of solid state had fallen considerably, and the sheer speed improvement that could be gained would more than justify the purchase.

Vohkus architected and engineered the complete solution, working outside normal business hours to install it in order to prevent operational disruption. Installation was completed over a seven-day period at the end of 2015.

Benefits realised

“The performance has absolutely blown away the previous kit – the all-flash array is capable of far more,” says the IT manager. “It’s solved our start-up problems and it now takes 30 seconds tops for someone to fire up their desktop.”

The new installation enabled Leaders to consolidate what was previously two storage platforms (one for VDI, and one for the servers running the apps) into a single storage platform. This enabled the company to make cost savings on both power and space, and also simplified management. It is currently supporting 50 virtual servers. The IT team also used to have to stage and stagger updates to the VDI and applications, often having to work out of hours. The IT manager explains: “The update process is quite intensive and typically we would need to do it outside of business hours. But thanks to the performance of the new system we can carry out updates during the day.”

“We couldn’t have done this project without Vohkus’s NetApp insight and their pre-work analysis of performance bottlenecks was essential to the success of the implementation. They covered all of the risks and replaced a fibre channel backbone with 10Gb Ethernet network and architecture. They tested it out in their own environment and basically ensured the implementation would be a success from the word go.”

Results

The IT manager says: “We’re a dynamic and forward-looking business, and we simply can’t afford to have IT hold us back. I knew the guys at Vohkus and had worked with them on previous projects, so they were the natural partner to go to when we needed help.

“The new storage system has delivered against its promises. The poor performance we were experiencing has been eradicated and staff are much happier that they don’t have to fight the system in order to do their jobs. All credit should be given for the hours Vohkus put in fine-tuning everything to our needs.”

Since the implementation, Vohkus has been invited to work with Leaders to improve its disaster recovery capability.

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

HEADQUARTERS
SOUTHAMPTON
0345 647 3000

SALES OFFICE
LONDON
0345 647 3100

SALES OFFICE
HEATHROW
0345 647 3200