Servium

CASE STUDY

Championing a better infrastructure for the future at CIPD

Having sweat the assets of their existing legacy storage system for as long as they were able, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development (CIPD) was regularly experiencing major system failures and although nothing critical had occurred it was only a matter of time, potentially damaging their reputation among their customers. Restricted by budget and under pressure to see changes happen quickly, CIPD sought a solution that would both save on their overall CAPEX spend and unlock greater capacity for future growth.

Pivot3

The customer

For more than 100 years, the Chartered Institute of Personnel and Development has been driving positive change and championing better work and working lives. Through rigorous research and by setting professional standards, they support over 145,000 members around the world in the HR and Learning and Development professions.

Considerations

- Legacy storage creating recurring failures
- Creating unacceptable business risk
- Needed economical long-term solution

The challenge

As the trusted professional body for HR and people development, it is imperative that CIPD's systems run without interruption all of the time. Their target SLAs were, however, being frequently put at risk by their legacy storage system that was increasingly difficult to maintain. The system was outdated, with both the hardware and software surrounding the infrastructure out of mainstream support.

As a result, the sourcing of replacement components was also becoming more difficult as failures continued to occur and the costs to continue maintenance were becoming excessive.

The storage system had been showing its age for some time, seeing the CIPD IT team work around the clock on a number of occasions to recover from failures and minimise the impact to users. Fortunately, all major failures had taken place outside of working hours, but the potential for any downtime significantly impacting the working day was growing.

"We were, of course, wary of the effect that such an incident would have on our reputation as a business that so many people are reliant on, and further, the ramifications any downtime would have on our valued relationships with customers," Robert Campbell, Head of Digital Workplace and Technology states. "Due to the nature of our business, and the trust we have built with those customers, it's essential that our staff are available and responsive all of the time, so we simply couldn't afford to take the risk of a failure hitting inside of working hours."

What's more, the data their storage was responsible for was considered business-critical, largely including shared data, and database facilities; without its availability much of CIPD's work would be called to a halt.

The conclusion was they needed an economical, long-term solution that would drive down costs while providing them with a scalable platform for the future, and they needed it fast.

The solution

Recognising the urgency of their requirement, CIPD needed to assess the options available to them.

Uncertain of which route would be most beneficial to the business in the long-run, and dissuaded from recreating their original infrastructure by the anticipated expense of doing so, CIPD engaged

a modern infrastructure. Not only would the Pivot3 solution mean an upfront cost saving of £250,000 when compared to traditional storage array alternatives, it would also provide them with much greater storage capacity, with 10 storage-only nodes offering a whopping 24TB each.

Working together, Servium and Pivot3's implementation of the technology was seamless and workloads were migrated over just a few days, meaning that CIPD didn't have long to wait before the solution was fully functional, and the risk of further failures removed.

with established solution provider, Servium for advice.

Working collaboratively alongside CIPD's IT team and through a number of solution workshops, Servium drew together proposals to explore the various approaches CIPD could take using a range of vendor technologies in order to qualify the best course of action.

with CIPD, wherein they shared evidence of their success, the roadmap for their technology, and further reassurance that the solution would meet their needs.

"We were impressed by Servium's market knowledge; they didn't just focus solely on what product deals there were today, but instead tapped into any future developments that we needed to be aware of as well. They provided the guidance we required to better understand exactly which solution would best fit the business. And Pivot3 emerged as the answer," Campbell affirms.

Assured by Servium's market knowledge and expertise, CIPD was ready to embrace the new technology and make the move to

The result

Pivot3's hyperconverged solution has more than exceeded CIPD's initial expectations, enabling them to realise a whole host of unexpected benefits and additional value. Extraordinarily, beyond the upfront savings, within 18 months the Pivot3 solution had paid for itself – in maintenance savings alone. Whilst the initial scope for the project was to identify a replacement storage solution, choosing a Pivot3

Highlights

- Solution built on highly flexible Pivot3 HCI
- £250,000 upfront savings versus alternative solutions
- Huge capacity for future growth
- Rapid implementation

After careful evaluation by all involved it transpired the most suitable approach was based on a modular, hyperconverged solution from Pivot3. However, due to the fact that hyperconverged technology was still very much in its infancy and new to the IT team, CIPD was initially reluctant to pursue this option. To allay their concerns, Servium arranged for Pivot3 to meet

hyperconverged infrastructure, CIPD now has a platform composed of both storage and compute. As such, they have been able to phase out other legacy server infrastructure and migrate workloads to the solution, avoiding further costly hardware refresh. Accordingly, CIPD's budget for hardware has now been reduced by £100,000, thanks to the hardware consolidation achieved. This has resulted in their data centre hosting just a handful of appliances while still achieving maximum system performance, and has enabled them to significantly reduce their spend on power consumption

able to add to this at any time, by slotting in new modules whenever they're needed. Scaling out for the future has been made easy, with the flexibility of adding, removing, or relocating nodes with zero impact on production services.

They have also noticed a substantial difference in performance, most notably within their data warehouse. It's seen them slash the time taken for important overnight batch runs. This had been a risk for them previously, as the processes were finishing around only an hour before the working day began, leaving

them little room for overruns or complications. The batch runs are now finishing well ahead of schedule, completing 30% faster on average, ensuring that CIPD's team has ample time to apply any fixes prior to the start of the working day.

"We didn't anticipate the number of benefits we would enjoy following the implementation of the Pivot3 solution. We obviously had an idea at the outset as to what sort of advantages we'd be expecting, but the cost savings, management, and performance gains have really blown us away," concludes Campbell.

Outcomes

- Solution payback in just 18 months
- Hardware budget reduced by £100,000 per annum
- 10 years headroom for data growth
- Consolidation of other infrastructure onto single platform

" *Servium was instrumental in helping us get this project off the ground. Without their knowledge and diligence I don't think we would have considered Pivot3 and ultimately arrived at this solution.* "

Robert Campbell, Head of Digital Workplace and Technology, CIPD

and software licensing. In fact, since implementing the Pivot3 appliances, for the first time in the company's history the CIPD facilities manager has reported a reduction in the data centre power bill.

As the Pivot3 solution is also purpose-built for scalability, its modular design has provided CIPD with far greater capacity than their legacy traditional infrastructure, offering plenty of headroom for growth and capacity for as much as the next 10 years. Furthermore, they have the added benefit of being