FUJITSU

Case study
Australian Electoral Commission

»In partnership with Fujitsu, the AEC was able to deliver the Virtual Tally Room for the 2010 Federal Election seamlessly and efficiently«

Tim Courtney, CIO, Australian Electoral Commission

The customer

Country: Australia
Industry: Federal Government
Founded: 1984
Divisional Offices: 134
Website: www.aec.gov.au

The challenge

The Australian Government called an election early. The Australian Electoral Commission (AEC) was responsible for running the election and reporting the results to the Australian public. This involved processing over 14 million enrolments, 1198 candidates at 7,700 polling places and operating a virtual tally room that received over 20,000 page views over the election period. There was no room for error as the country awaited news of the new government and the capabilities of the AEC and Fujitsu were on show.

The solution

Fujitsu provided a fully managed Secure Internet Gateway and Web Hosting Service as the backbone for communication links to internet-enabled AEC business solutions. Services include external e-mail; web hosting of critical AEC applications and information, and a virtual tally room that enabled on-line access to federal election and referendum results.

The customer

The AEC is responsible for conducting federal elections and national referenda. It maintains the high profile Commonwealth electoral roll of over 14 million voters and electronic returns applications, which contain sensitive personal data. The AEC's significant public communication and education role is supported by its internet presence which relies on critical high volume, robust and scalable systems.

While the AEC plays a key role in managing electoral roles, the organisation really comes into the spotlight during a Federal election, where it is called on to provide a seamless experience with timely reporting for the 14 million Australians who vote.

The challenge

The federal election is an incredibly demanding event held approximately every 3 years. At this time the resources of the AEC are stretched to the limit as it co-ordinates an event that has the attention of the entire Australian population.

The statistics illustrate the magnitude of the task - 1198 candidates, 7,700 polling places, 15 km of data cabling in the national tally room, a 500 agent election call centre, and 20,000 pages on the Virtual Tally Room (VTR) website. The VTR website was to be seamlessly updated every 90 seconds on election night with split-second accuracy. The system had to service up to 800 million website hits and the internet connection had to manage over 850M/bits of continuous traffic during election night, without error.

As the security of private information and the authenticity of the results were critical, the AEC's requirements mandated that the physical Secure Internet Gateway (SIG) location achieve and maintain a DSD Gateway Certification to the PROTECTED level.

"If the integrity of the VTR was compromised, the reputation of the AEC would be tarnished as an impartial provider of electoral services to the Australian people. We only get one opportunity to get it right."
Tim Courtney, CIO, Australian Electoral Commission

The benefit

- The AEC was able to provide timely and accurate reporting on the results of the 2010 Federal Election through its Virtual Tally Room.
- The systems developed allowed the AEC to assist with the 2011 NSW State Election and future elections around Australia.

Products and services

- Fujitsu Business Management System for ISO9001 approach
- PRINCE2™ for consistency in managing deliverables
- Fujitsu Infrastructure Design and Build Methodology for design best practice
- Fujitsu Risk Management Process
- IT Service Management, aligned to ITIL ® V3, for lifecycle management of deliverables

The solution

Fujitsu provided a Defence Signals Directorate (DSD) accredited Secure Internet Gateway (SIG) and Web Hosting Service (WHS). The solution and project were to be underpinned by an absolute requirement for a robust project delivery, service management and operation within an ITIL® aligned framework.

The fully managed SIG and WHS provided the backbone for communication links to internet-enabled AEC business solutions, including external e-mail; web hosting of critical AEC applications and information, as well as the virtual tally room, enabling on-line access to federal election and referendum results; and web browsing and remote access for external business to business connectivity.

Fujitsu and the AEC collaborated to design, deliver and manage the SIG and WHS within an exceptionally challenging timeframe due to the early timing of the Federal election. To greatly increase the success of this complex project, Fujitsu stringently adhered to industry standards and COTS components, and excellent teams were allocated from both organisations.

The solution provides the AEC with hosting for the electoral roll and VTR systems from two geographically dispersed Tier III data centres, server and storage monitoring and management, network management, and SIG services for both production and disaster recovery environments.

The methodologies employed by Fujitsu maintained control in the high pressure environment of the project to ensure the AEC had a successful transition at the commissioning of its SIG and WHS.

The use of the Fujitsu PRINCE2™ based Project Management Methodology provided a framework for the planning, monitoring, reporting and control activities necessary to achieve the delivery of project products and services to specification, on time, within budget and to the expectations of the AEC. The Fujitsu Business Management System provided an ISO9001:2008 certified approach to the management, development, and delivery of applications, infrastructure, systems integration and services.

The benefit

The delivery went without error and proved Fujitsu's approach and execution that was supported by robust service management principles, process and governance was entirely suitable for the requirements of the project.

On election night the project team maintained constant communication between the key sites including the four data centres, the National Tally Room as well as the AEC national office in Parkes, ACT. As is often the case our success was measured by remaining "unnoticed" and providing the service and delivery that would support this critical event.

The first polling booths closed at 6.00pm and by 6:30pm the initial results began to be published online at the VTR. While results were being updated every 90 seconds, monitoring calls on the infrastructure including internet bandwidth utilisation, server CPU performance and Intrusion Prevention System behaviour were being transmitted every 15 minutes.

Conclusion

Fujitsu in partnership with AEC provided a seamless service, meaning that on Election Night, the election result was the headline news, rather that the IT service. The passion within the project has given Fujitsu key insights in to the service management regime needed, at all stages through the service lifecycle, to support critical IT services with secure environments

One of the AEC's key business drivers and operating principles is that of collaboration. It was this principle that drove our continued journey to deliver the NSW State Election on the 26th March 2011.

This engagement between the AEC, Fujitsu and the NSW State Government demonstrated our collective appetite and ambition to build on our success. The delivery went without error and it proved again the value of an approach and execution supported by robust service management principles process and governance.