

Imperial Tobacco

Imperial Tobacco and Fujitsu deploy resilient virtualised server platform that cuts costs, simplifies maintenance and delivers new services more rapidly

» The Fujitsu solution has transformed our server environment, reduced our carbon footprint and is expected to save us £500k in the first year alone «

Karen Charlton, Senior Technical Specialist, Imperial Tobacco



The customer

Headquartered in Bristol, UK, Imperial Tobacco employs 38,000 employees worldwide and its products, including brands such as Davidoff, Gauloises, Golden Virginia and Rizla, are available in over 160 countries. Its geographic diversity and versatile multi-product portfolio provides business resilience and a strong platform for future growth. Critical to the company’s ongoing success is a robust, high-performing IT environment that can deliver business-critical services locally and globally.

The challenge

For many years, Imperial Tobacco has operated 147 servers across three central server farms in Bristol – one at its head office, one at an ancillary office and one maintained in a third party datacentre. As the contract with the hosting provider was coming to an end, the company decided it was time to re-evaluate its server infrastructure and explore new, more efficient ways of delivering applications and services to its local and global workforce.

“We wanted to minimise the costs associated with hosting all our servers so bringing the third party datacentre back in-house seemed like a sensible option however, we lacked the physical space and air-conditioning facilities to make this happen within a traditional server environment,” explains Karen Charlton, Senior Technical Specialist at Imperial Tobacco. *“That’s why we began to look at virtualisation as an alternative that would drastically reduce the number of servers needed, minimise cost, simplify management and speed up the delivery of new applications.”*

Charlton’s team drew up proposals to rationalise the three server farms into two sites: one for production and one for disaster recovery, which could meet the needs of the business now and as it expands in the future. After inviting four companies to tender, Imperial Tobacco selected Fujitsu as its virtualisation partner.

“We were impressed with the Fujitsu’s team knowledge and experience of virtualisation projects,” comments Charlton. *“In addition, I had previously worked with Fujitsu on deploying a pen tablet solution to our sales force so I was confident they could rise to this particular challenge.”*

THE CUSTOMER

Country: UK
 Industry: Manufacturing
 Founded: 1901
 Employees: 38,000
 Website: www.imperial-tobacco.co.uk



THE CHALLENGE

Imperial Tobacco wanted to transform its existing server environment to embrace virtualisation in order to deliver more flexible, cost-effective and resilient applications and services.

THE SOLUTION

Imperial Tobacco partnered with Fujitsu to migrate 147 physical servers to a virtualised environment, running on two BX600 chassis each housing a number of BX620 blades. This new platform is responsible for hosting 119 applications and databases.

THE BENEFIT

- Reduced number of physical servers makes maintenance much less of a burden.
- Projected 50-70 per cent reduction in energy costs and heat output.
- New applications and services can be configured and delivered in a matter of minutes rather than days.
- Imperial Tobacco expects to make total savings of £500k per annum thanks to Fujitsu’s virtual server environment.

The solution

The Imperial Tobacco and Fujitsu teams participated in a three-day workshop to assess and fine tune the project requirements. From the outset, there were a number of criteria that had to be met if the project was to be successful.

"It was critical that the new virtual environment would offer the same level of resilience and the same high service level agreements to the business," adds Charlton. "Also crucial was that there could be no interruption to the business – the migration had to be totally seamless and not impinge on the user experience in any way."

For this reason, the team worked after hours and weekends over a three month period to migrate the traditional server platform to the new virtualised environment. As 75 per cent of the existing servers were over three years old, these were sent for recycling and Imperial Tobacco invested in a new high-performing server platform from Fujitsu consisting of one Primergy BX600 chassis at each of the two sites. In the head office, the chassis houses six BX620 blades, each acting as a virtual host for production, while the disaster recovery chassis houses three blade servers. Each site also has a NetApp FAS 3020 cluster attached to provide shared storage.

"These servers are responsible for supporting business critical applications and databases to the UK and the world so it was vital the migration was smooth and involved zero downtime," says Charlton. "The Fujitsu team delivered the new solution on time and in budget, it took three months to test, install and migrate the 119 different applications and associated data, which was remarkable given we were working primarily on weekends."

The benefit

The new virtualised environment has delivered instant benefits to Imperial Tobacco. Firstly, the new server platform is much easier to manage, saving on maintenance, while allowing Charlton and her team to deploy new services more rapidly.

"Previously delivering a new application would take a number of days; now, we can use a template to create a virtual machine in a matter of minutes. This frees up the two-person team to focus on proactive and strategic objectives rather than spending time maintaining servers," explains Charlton. "There are projects that we have had on the back burner pending available resource which we now have time to give our full attention to – that can only be good for the wider business."

Furthermore, the huge reduction in the number of physical servers has freed up more space to be repurposed as office facilities. It has also had a significant impact on energy use and the need for air conditioning. This in turn has led to cost savings.

"We're expecting to see power savings of between 50 and 70 per cent in the first year, with a similar reduction in heat output. Given our company's commitment to reducing our carbon footprint, this is a critical advantage," adds Charlton. "Combine these savings with the lower maintenance costs and the fact that we no longer pay for third party hosting equates to projected total savings of £500k per annum. That means the virtualisation solution will pay for itself in less than 18 months."

Conclusion

The new virtualised server infrastructure has enabled Imperial Tobacco to deliver resilient, flexible and cost-effective services to the business and already Charlton and her team are planning to deploy a raft of new applications to help the business run more effectively.

"We will be deploying significant application projects in the coming months and the new environment will make that process simple and pain-free," concludes Charlton. "Thanks to the professionalism, experience and dedication of the Fujitsu team, we are now well placed to meet the changing demands of the modern enterprise. The solution has transformed our IT operations"

Contact

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