

# Case Study

## National House Building Council

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Mark Davies, Web Transformation Lead, National House Building Council



### The customer

Established in 1936, NHBC is the UK's largest provider of new home warranties. Around 80 per cent of new homes built in the UK each year have an NHBC 10-year warranty. NHBC is also the UK's largest single Approved Inspector for Building Regulations. Its other activities include the provision of services linked to house building and general construction including energy ratings, health and safety, sustainability and training. It also provides industry statistics and benchmarking services.

### The challenge

In recent years, NHBC has been able to maintain a share of the new homes warranty market in excess of 80 per cent; however since the economic crash of 2008, the UK housing market has become increasingly competitive with a small number of providers competing more effectively to build share in this market.

In order to protect its market share and defend against customer attrition, NHBC recognised that there was an opportunity to further differentiate its offering on value and quality of service rather than competing on price.

*"The market had declined by around 50 per cent as a result of the crash and competition had become more fierce. We wanted to set ourselves apart from our rivals through enhanced services," explains Mark Davies, Web Transformation Lead, NHBC. "As a result we decided to roll out two online portals that would act as personalised information hubs for both home owners and building partners. There is a huge amount of information related to the construction and purchase of a house but this would be the first time it was available online in one place."*

NHBC had two key criteria when it was selecting a partner for the job: it would have to have a world-class hosting facility and it would also need the capability to not only host but also design and develop the software.

*"We needed a scalable environment that could eventually be used by hundreds of thousands of users and we wanted to avoid the scenario where one company writes the software and someone else hosts it as that adds risk to the process," adds Davies. "Fujitsu was able to provide the managed hosting services and help us develop the portals so it was a one stop shop."*

### THE CUSTOMER

Country: United Kingdom  
Industry: Housing  
Founded: 1936  
Number of employees: 1,000  
Website: [www.nhbc.co.uk](http://www.nhbc.co.uk)



### CHALLENGE

NHBC wanted to differentiate itself from the competition by offering a more personalised service to builders and home owners, following a severe market downturn. It needed a partner to design and host an online portal that would aggregate all information relating to each newly built home so that home owners can access it when buying a new build.

### APPROACH

The Home User Guide, developed as the result of collaboration between Fujitsu and NHBC, was built on a new Oracle platform and is now hosted and managed on Fujitsu's private cloud.

## THE BENEFIT

- Home owners can now access all the information relating to their house in one place, from boiler service schedule to building specifications to when the lawn needs mowing
- This has helped NHBC remain competitive and minimise customer attrition rates
- Builders can personalise each portal with their own logos and layouts, providing further levels of customisation
- Fujitsu hosts the service and can easily scale it up to meet demand which is anticipated to run into hundreds of thousands of home owners
- Fujitsu's security ensures the protection of personal and commercially sensitive information

## The solution

NHBC chose to use Fujitsu's Private Cloud environment for hosting the new online services and to work alongside the Fujitsu development team using Oracle and WebCenter technologies. Within the cloud, the solution is deployed on a total of four physical servers with additional network storage provided by NetApp. Two of the three servers are used to provide Production and Pre-production environments. The third server is used to provide a single dual purpose Test and Development environment. The Fourth is provided for Failover.

*"We developed the Home User Guide portal and Partner portal over the course of 18 months using Fujitsu's agile methodology. This involved taking user case studies, applying business analysis and the design, build and test of code," comments Davies. "Twelve Fujitsu employees worked closely with our internal team to ensure things ran smoothly. By spending two days per week here onsite, it gave them the opportunity to really understand the business and what we were trying to achieve."*

The result is the new Home User Guide, a portal that enables NHBC's builder customers to deliver an online hub containing all of the information required by the new homeowner. The web application provides an easy-to-use administration suite so builders can upload information, specifications, images and video clips about the new home, and deliver this information as a self-contained website unique to each specific home.

In addition, NHBC and Fujitsu have also developed a Partner portal that enables builders to easily register new construction sites and plots for new home warranties online. The self-service application replaces an existing Extranet solution and in so doing hugely enhances the customer experience by allowing them to conduct the complete transaction online – from registration and document uploads through to payment facilitation.

## The benefit

The new portals give NHBC a clear way to differentiate itself from the competition and maintain market share while providing builders with a comprehensive, customised solution that can be offered to home buyers for free.

*"We can give home owners all the information they need to run their new home in one place at no charge, from when the boiler needs servicing to when the grass needs mowing. That's a powerful incentive to choose a builder that offers our warranty," continues Davies. "It's easy to use and simple for us to deploy. Fujitsu hosts it and can scale according to demand so we don't have to worry."*

Fujitsu's Oracle platform also allows NHBC to customise each website for individual building firms, with their own logos and layout. This adds a more personal touch and has been welcomed by customers. As the service grows, NHBC expects to host hundreds of thousands of home owners and is confident that Fujitsu can scale to support this ambition.

*"We know that Fujitsu has the resilience and scale to cope with a huge number of users and we fully expect to see the numbers grow as the Guide gets offered by more builders," says Davies. "We're sure this service will play a critical role in keeping customers with us and attracting new house buyers. It is something the competition simply cannot offer."*

## Conclusion

With the Home User Guide fully tested and delivered and the Partner portal in the final stages of deployment, NHBC has begun to look to the future. It has collaborated again with Fujitsu on a Management and Reporting portal that will enable builders to more easily and accurately analyse data relating to build speed, faults and other areas:

**"Fujitsu has proven the ideal partner and has designed and delivered a robust platform that enables our builder customers to offer a fully customised website specifically for each new property they build. That helps us differentiate ourselves and keep ahead of the competition."**

## About Fujitsu

Fujitsu is the leading Japanese information and communication technology (ICT) company offering a full range of technology products, solutions and services. Over 170,000 Fujitsu people support customers in more than 100 countries. We use our experience and the power of ICT to shape the future of society with our customers. For more information, please see [www.fujitsu.com](http://www.fujitsu.com)

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