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Kim Houston
Project Manager
Whitbread

Whitbread engaged Fujitsu to rationalise over 600 legacy applications creating a more agile and easily managed software environment.

At a glance

Country: United Kingdom

Industry: Hospitality

Founded: 1742

Employees: 45,000

Website: www.whitbread.com

Challenge

Whitbread had over 600 IBM Domino applications running on an end-of-life Windows 2000 server. It needed to streamline these applications and upgrade them to a new hardware and software environment to increase performance and availability.

Solution

The company evaluated a number of vendors before deciding that Fujitsu had the requisite Lotus Notes experience as well as the ability to analyse and streamline the existing data and applications for a successful migration.

Benefit

- Over 600 applications have been rationalised to just seven, enabling easier management
- New software environments futureproof critical business functions
- A more flexible platform enables Whitbread to be responsive to market and operational demands
- An unchanged user interface removes the need for retraining and associated costs

Customer

Founded in 1742, Whitbread is the UK's largest hotel, restaurant and coffee shop operator with 45,000 employees who are passionate about making special experiences for its millions of customers, both in the UK and overseas. Its brands include Costa, the largest and fastest growing coffee shop chain in the UK, which also operates in 31 countries globally, and the UK's largest hotel chain, Premier Inn.

Products and services

- FUJITSU Systems Integration
- Application Modernization

Challenge

Historically, Whitbread had developed and deployed over 600 Domino applications for its IBM Lotus Notes platform, encompassing simple document repositories as well as complex business process systems. These applications were hosted on a single server running Microsoft Windows 2000, which had reached end-of-life status, prompting the company to refresh the hardware. It also took this opportunity to weed out the hundreds of legacy applications that were no longer in use while improving the performance of key business critical software.

"It was legacy infrastructure on which numerous databases depended, however, there was no support in place and the hardware was on its last legs," explains Kim Houston, Project Manager, Whitbread. "Everything from workflow to finance to logistics and facilities job tickets relied on this end-of-life server so clearly we had to upgrade the underlying hardware while rationalising the number of applications."

Whitbread had already engaged Fujitsu as an overall service provider but, nevertheless, evaluated a range of vendors to ensure it was getting the best expertise at the best price. Based on a compelling proof-of-concept exercise by Fujitsu, the company decided that it had the most advanced and most cost-effective approach to solving the problem.

"Simply put, Fujitsu had the best knowledge out of the suppliers we looked at and met our key criteria in terms of cost, Lotus Notes experience and the ability to analyse and streamline the existing data and applications," adds Houston. "We didn't want to rewrite the databases from scratch and Fujitsu showed us a path to meet that objective, making it the natural partner for this project."

Solution

The Fujitsu team collaborated closely with Whitbread to transform the active Domino applications into a more modern, easily supported environment while maintaining business critical functionality. This entailed analysing the usage of each of the 600-plus databases and archiving those no longer in use.

"Fujitsu performed detailed analysis in terms of when each database and application was last used, by whom and for what purpose, which enabled us to exclude and archive hundreds at a stroke," continues Houston. "We then proceeded to migrate those still in use to either C#.NET or Microsoft SharePoint, depending on the logic complexity of each application."

Fujitsu employed automated tooling processes to minimise risk and ensure repeatable, rapid results as it transitioned the refreshed applications to virtual Windows 2012 servers within Whitbread's private cloud environment. As a result, it was able to migrate to the new platform within a matter of months without disrupting day-to-day business operations. Furthermore, by leveraging its extensive offshore resources, during transformation and for support, Fujitsu was able to keep costs to a minimum.

"Fujitsu put together a transition paper that outlined the process, costs and the details of the managed service agreement," says Houston. "That ensured a seamless and transparent migration to the new environment."

Benefit

Out of the six-hundred-plus applications, only seven remain in live production as a result of Fujitsu's stringent approach to rationalisation. This makes for a much more agile and easily managed software environment, reducing support costs and improving the user experience.

"With Fujitsu's help we have managed to identify only those elements that make a tangible difference to the business," comments Houston. "These have been converted onto new software platforms that have a clear roadmap and can be supported by us in-house."

Removing Whitbread's reliance on aged, unsupported technology not only future-proofs the company but it also introduces a more adaptive and flexible environment, meaning the company can respond more quickly to changing market and operational demands.

"Fujitsu has provided a roadmap for the future as well as increasing the functionality in terms of features such as web accessibility, which makes users more productive," remarks Houston. "That means core business systems are more available and suffer less downtime which makes us more efficient as a company."

Even though the back-end has been entirely transformed, one other crucial benefit is that the user interface remains unchanged. Because there are no visible differences, Whitbread avoided the need for the costly retraining of thousands of users.

"Fujitsu gave us a radically streamlined application stack wrapped in a managed service agreement that provides peace of mind," concludes Houston. "We are confident that together we can support these critical business functions and continue to adapt them as our needs evolve."

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