



“We have significantly reduced the amount of space taken up by our IT systems, as well as cutting the sheer volume of power and cooling that was required to support our business. Using VMware Infrastructure 3, we can provision new virtual machines in minutes and react faster to business demands. The virtual approach means that we are far more agile as an organisation.”

— Paul Connah, Network Manager,
Admiral Insurance

KEY HIGHLIGHTS

Challenge

To cut the number of servers within the company's data centre, and to reduce the power and cooling requirements for running IT.

Solution

Halved the number of physical servers required using virtual infrastructure, while speeding up the deployment of new services to the business

VMware at Work

- VMware® Infrastructure 3 Enterprise, featuring:
 - VMware® ESX Server 3 with VMFS
 - VMware® VirtualCenter 2
 - VMware® VMotion™
 - VMware® Distributed Resource Scheduler (DRS)
 - VMware® High Availability (HA)

Deployment environment

- ESX Server on three IBM Blade Centers, with IBM HS20 Blades
- Two IBM DS4500 SAN arrays
- IBM Director for managing physical hardware platforms
- Guest operating systems: Microsoft Windows Server 2003
- Applications include Microsoft Exchange 2003 Server, SQL Server, file and print servers, other networking servers and specialist financial applications

Admiral Group PLC

Admiral Group PLC is a leading provider of motor insurance in the UK. With Admiral Insurance, elephant.co.uk, Diamond and Bell all recognizable brands operated by the firm, it currently provides insurance services to around 1.3 million motorists. With two main offices in Cardiff and Swansea, the company employs over 2,000 staff.

Admiral's main data centre in Cardiff could not be expanded any further: the room was unable to hold any more servers, and it had also reached the limit on the amount of electricity that could be supplied. This was impacting on Admiral's ability to support new services, as there was no room to host the physical server platforms needed. Secondly, the company had machines from a number of different providers, so management was another overhead.

To solve these issues Paul Connah, Network Manager at Admiral Insurance decided to virtualize the company's x86-based servers using VMware Infrastructure 3 and IBM Blades. Working with VMware Enterprise Partner Apex, this significantly reduced the number of physical servers within the main data centre. New applications and service can be delivered to the business within only a few hours, while a second data centre and SAN at the Swansea office offers a convenient disaster recovery platform. Overall, Admiral benefits from increased flexibility, reduced management overheads and lower power and cooling requirements.

Results

- Reduced number of physical servers from over 60 to just 26 host machines
- Significantly cut power and cooling consumption in main data centre
- Data centre footprint reduced considerably
- Management overhead across entire server infrastructure diminished
- Virtualisation project fulfils significant role in overall company corporate social responsibility plan

