



Liverpool Direct reduces costs and safeguards customer services with proactive server management



Customer agenda

- Cost Reduction
- Risk Avoidance
- Continuous Improvement/Innovation

Services

- Infrastructure Automation & Orchestration

Technology

Software:

Microsoft System Center Operations Manager (SCOM)

Hardware:

HP ProLiant servers

Customer challenge

Liverpool Direct Ltd (LDL) provides IT services to a number of private and public sector customers, including schools and local authorities. To support the needs of its growing customer base, the company has a diverse server estate that hosts more than 200 business-critical systems on behalf of its customers. To maintain its Service Level Agreements (SLAs), LDL needs to minimise downtime. With limited visibility of server performance, management was purely reactive and lacked efficiency.

Computacenter solution

LDL enlisted help from Computacenter to design and build a server management solution based on Microsoft System Center Operations Manager (SCOM). Computacenter installed the solution on 250 servers in just four weeks. Using SCOM, LDL is able to monitor its server environment round-the-clock and is alerted to potential performance issues.

Results

LDL has been able to minimise system downtime, increase efficiency and facilitate future growth. The number of server-related issues has dropped by around 75 per cent. This has enabled LDL to not only enhance customer SLAs, but also reduce its cost base. Better systems availability also safeguards LDL's reputation and helps its customers, such as Liverpool City Council, the Amateur Boxing Association of England and more than 300 schools to improve end user productivity and service delivery.

“The project with Computacenter has helped to increase user productivity and enables our customers to deliver more consistent services.”

“Server downtime could impact the productivity of our client base as well as the delivery of public services.”

Mark Orford
Head of Technical
Architecture and Strategy
Liverpool Direct Ltd

Customer profile

Empowering organisations through ICT excellence

Liverpool Direct Limited (LDL) is a joint venture partnership between Liverpool City Council (19.9 per cent) and BT (80.1 per cent). It is the largest public/private partnership of its kind in the UK.

As well as providing ICT and business support services to the city council, LDL has a number of other customers in both the private and public sector. LDL employs more than 1,200 people and has a net turnover of approximately £85 million per annum.

The company's vision is to innovate, lead and deliver service excellence by placing the customer at the heart of everything it does. Its business strategy is based on 'excellent people supported by an excellent ICT platform'.

Business challenge

Safeguarding the availability of customer services

LDL has an aggressive growth strategy based on the principle of shared platforms and is increasingly delivering more services to more customers. This has led to higher utilisation of its IT infrastructure and a diverse server estate.

The company's server environment encompasses both traditional and blade technologies. LDL has around 250 servers supporting both its own and customer activities. These servers are distributed between two datacenters and host in excess of 200 applications, including email, web services, finance and HR systems as well as business-specific applications that are vital for Liverpool City Council and all other LDL customers.

LDL must ensure that these systems are available round-the-clock to meet its customer service level agreements (SLAs). Mark Orford, Head of Technical Architecture and Strategy at LDL, explains: “Server downtime could impact the productivity of our client base as well as the delivery of public services. With the customer at the heart of everything we do, downtime is simply not an option. We must always meet, if not exceed, our SLAs.”

The variety of technologies in LDL's datacenters means that the environment can be complex and time-consuming to manage. The company's existing server monitoring solution was reaching end of life and had limited functionality.

Stuart Ross, a Project Manager for LDL, comments: “The server support team wanted to improve efficiency by taking a more proactive approach to server management. Our existing solution did not offer the in-depth monitoring and reporting needed to achieve these goals.”

“Thanks to careful planning, the implementation was delivered smoothly and within the required timeframe.”

Stuart Ross
Project Manager
Liverpool Direct Ltd

IT solution

Continuous server monitoring for increased IT availability

To meet these goals and minimise the resources required for server management, LDL turned to IT services and solutions provider Computacenter. Mark comments: “Computacenter is the incumbent provider of desktops and servers and we had partnered with the company before for server virtualisation. Due to the success of the partnership so far, Computacenter was the obvious choice to help us deploy a new server management solution.”

The two companies worked together from the initial stages of the project to refine LDL's requirements, and then designed and built a solution based on Microsoft Systems Center Operations Manager (SCOM).

The project was jointly managed by LDL and Computacenter and was delivered within very tight timescales. “We had to implement the new Microsoft solution before the support contract for the legacy system expired,” explains Stuart. Computacenter's engineers installed Microsoft SCOM across all 250 of LDL's servers in just four weeks, and provided knowledge transfer to facilitate management on an ongoing basis. “Thanks to careful planning, the implementation was delivered smoothly and within the required timeframe,” adds Stuart.

Now the project is complete, LDL uses Microsoft SCOM to monitor its server estate round-the-clock. The solution provides automated alerts to LDL's IT team regarding hardware failure and performance degradation before they impact service availability.

Results

Safeguarding customer service levels

LDL can now manage its server estate in a more efficient manner and deal with problems proactively to minimise downtime. Mark comments: “The project proved to be very successful, and met our original objectives. Computacenter's expertise and experience was vital in helping us optimise our investment in the Microsoft technology.” By improving its server management capabilities, LDL is able to:

Reduce operational costs: The new solution, which was purchased through Computacenter, not only has a lower total cost of ownership, but will also increase efficiency, enabling LDL to manage its server estate with less resource.

Increase availability and customer service levels: Since the implementation, LDL has seen the volume of server issues drop by up to 75 per cent. As well as reducing the support overhead, this has resulted in less downtime and enabled LDL to offer better SLAs for customers.

Support growth: As LDL's customer base expands, it will be able to support a growing server estate without significantly increasing resources.

These factors help to safeguard LDL's reputation and profitability. “Poor IT availability can have a detrimental effect on the end user perception of our services,” comments Mark. “The project with Computacenter has helped to increase user productivity and enables our customers to deliver more consistent services, whether they are in the public or private sector.”

More resources

To find out more about our infrastructure services, visit:

www.computacenter.com/services

Read more customer case studies at:

www.computacenter.com/case-study