

Case study: City & Guilds Group

Successful data centre migration for the City & Guilds Group

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A registered charity, the London-based City & Guilds Group was established in 1878 to develop a national system of technical education and it now offers more than 500 qualifications through 10,000 centres and training providers in 81 countries. City & Guilds qualifications are valued by employers across the world, helping individuals develop their talents and abilities for career progression.

Working with CAE the City & Guilds Group embarked on an ambitious data centre relocation and transformation project. CAE ensured the success of the project, which included design services teamed with HP server, storage and software technology, to provide a more efficient and future-proof IT environment that will support future needs and reduce CapEx.

KEY FACTS

City & Guilds Group is a global leader in skills development

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City & Guilds Group has a presence in every further education college in the UK and 10,000 training centres across the globe

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City & Guilds Group works with over 200 companies worldwide

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Qualifications have been awarded to 20 million people since 2000





THE CHALLENGE

In response to issues experienced with its existing set-up, the City & Guilds Group wanted to migrate away from its ageing and inefficient IT environment. Amongst the reasons driving this decision was the increase in user login/start-up times for some applications being measured in minutes, a major cause of frustration for all users of the system. In addition, the City & Guilds Group wanted to move to a new data centre provision to allow operational costs to be reduced and to release equity from part of its valuable city centre real estate.

As a global business its IT infrastructure supports the UK part of their operation and uses more cloud-based type services like Microsoft® Office 365 for collaboration in other countries. Its entire desktop estate was in central London in a building which wasn't fit for purpose as a data centre - a 20 year-old, home grown facility with over 70 racks and lots of old decaying equipment. The estate was archaic and undocumented and carried extensive support agreements and various outages were experienced over the years.

The City & Guilds Group had invested in a Citrix environment for all end users and had also heavily virtualised its environment with VMware resulting in some 600 virtual machines running on 14 physical HP ProLiant hosts. It had also implemented IBM v7000 Storage Area Networks at its main production site and at a separate co-location Disaster Recovery (DR) site run by managed service provider Attenda, but had been experiencing problems, particularly surrounding reclamation of unused disk space. It also found that its 15 year-old Symantec Backup Exec solution was no longer fit for purpose.

The City & Guilds Group decided to move its entire production environment into a co-location facility at nearby Hoddesdon while maintaining its DR site. This was a complex project and was made even more challenging by the communication needs of supporting around 500 workers in London, and a further 800 throughout the UK and abroad.

"We had an undocumented estate and a complexity of business applications. This was a once-in-a-lifetime event for us and the ability to move the data centre with minimum risk to the business was not our core competency. We needed external assistance from experts who had done this before, because of our own lack of capacity and capability, we needed help to break the project down into manageable chunks and make sure that there was no loss of service or impact to the organisation. As well as the physical infrastructure we also needed a lot of help with professional services."

Ian Turfrey, Chief Information Officer, City & Guilds Group.

IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS

An easy to implement and manage solution

Enable the organisation to move to a new building on time and within budget

Achieve a seamless migration without interrupting daily business

Deliver a more robust and trusted backup solution

Provide a more efficient and future-proof IT environment

SERVICES DELIVERED

Design and scope

Logistics and resource co-ordination

Project and relationship management

Onsite account management

Complete data centre migration services



THE SOLUTION

Following a tendering process, which included the incumbent vendors, IBM and Symantec, the City & Guilds Group decided that none of their solutions met requirements and approached CAE. CAE's Storage Consultants recommended a high level solution and was able to leverage its strength of relationship to arrange free pre-sales and consultancy in collaboration with HP as a value-added service. CAE acted as the main link between HP and the City & Guilds Group making the overall engagement painless and ensuring successful implementation.

Through a series of workshops CAE supported the demonstration of a range of products from the HP portfolio including 3PAR storage, Data Protector and StoreOnce technologies. Following the demonstration of HP 3PAR, the City & Guilds Group was convinced that HP was the correct choice based on the demonstrable Return on Investment and performance improvements they would experience. At this point a scoping and design exercise was undertaken, led by CAE and supported by HP specialists where required.

CAE provided logistics and coordination of resource and its flexible commercials enabled the project to keep within budget and delivery timescales. Onsite account management was provided to attend to urgent issues and weekly project meetings kept the project on track. CAE also negotiated to include at no extra cost HP Data Protector and 3PAR training.

An HP network design specialist also worked with the City & Guilds Group to design the new network which is fully supported and maintained by CAE.

"We chose CAE because they really understood our business and our challenges and due to their very strong partnership with HP we were provided with a forward-thinking solution that together they were able to execute. We felt in safe hands with CAE."

Ian Turfrey, Chief Information Officer, City & Guilds Group.



THE RESULTS

The City & Guilds Group now benefits from a data centre that is equipped with the latest technologies, which provides improved stability, performance, security and resilience. The organisation now has an up-to-the-minute datacentre which has future-proofed them for planned expansion.

Reducing the data centre footprint has reduced operational costs for power and cooling.

Significant improvement has been made to user experience in terms of login and start-up times.

"With the help of CAE and HP this ambitious project was completed within the timeframe needed for the City & Guilds Group to vacate its old premises and with no business disruption. Collaborating with both CAE and HP was a very positive experience."

Simon Johnson, Technical Consultant, City & Guilds Group.

TECHNOLOGY DEPLOYED

HP BladeSystem c7000 enclosures x 4

HP ProLiant BL460c Gen8 server blades x 28

HP Virtual Connect Flex Fabric

HP 3PAR StoreServ 7400 Storage

HP Data Protector

HP StoreOnce Backup

HP OneView

HP Double-Take

HP Insight Remote Control

HP TippingPoint Security

HP Cloud Licences

Citrix Cloud Bridges

Cisco Nexus switches

BENEFITS

Completion on time and on budget avoiding substantial penalty

Successful transition to new premises with no interruption to user experience

Reduction in data centre footprint which has reduced operational costs for power and cooling

Significant improvement in user login/start up times from over 3 minutes to less than 30 seconds for identified services

The addition of space-saving deduplication technology which has reduced CapEx

Improved IT infrastructure for future expansion of the organisation

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CAE Technology Services is a leading IT value added reseller offering a unique combination of solutions and services in all core infrastructure areas, including networking, data centre, virtualisation and client. Recognised by industry awards, and as one of the best companies to work for by the Sunday Times, CAE has a demonstrable track record of technical excellence and outstanding customer service.

Standing out as providing the most responsive and flexible service, CAE traverses the traditional boundaries of IT systems, networking and telecoms, to deliver a comprehensive and trusted service.

Our services include

- Datacentre Essentials
- The Adaptable Workplace
- Video Enhanced Collaboration
- Eco Efficiency
- Cloud Flexibility
- Managed Services
- Professional Services
- Visitor Experience

CAE Technology Services

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