

OTTO



Objective

Replace ageing infrastructure with a new environment to support business growth

Approach

Investigated different vendor solutions on the market and conducted proof-of-concept testing

IT Matters

- Eliminates complex switching and extensive cabling
- Simplifies management with a single pane of glass
- Delivers power, flexibility and scalability

Business Matters

- Supports Otto in its move from traditional mail order to e-commerce
- Handles the big data that is a major Otto asset
- Provides support for crucial business growth

Otto Netherlands makes a successful transition to e-commerce

HPE ConvergedSystem 700 supports business growth for one of Europe's online retailers



Following a move from traditional print mail order to e-commerce, Otto Netherlands, a subsidiary of one of Europe's best known online retailers, needed to replace the ageing office automation systems. Seeking ease of management and flexible scalability it chose an HPE ConvergedSystem 700 solution which can handle big data and is also scalable.

Challenge

Need to replace ageing systems

In 1949, Werner Otto started selling shoes from his garage. Not wanting customers to know he operated from a garage he had the idea to distribute images of the shoes - and that was the start of a mail order empire. Now, the Hamburg-based Otto Group has a €12 billion turnover, employs 50,000 people and is one of Europe's leading online retailers.

“Our investment now will have to service double or triple the amount of traffic in two to three years and that was our business driver for choosing the flexible and scalable HPE ConvergedSystem 700. The HPE 3PAR StoreServ Storage is amazing. It’s fast and reliable, easy to manage and the virtual infrastructure with HPE Virtual Connect FlexFabric is the most exciting thing to work with.”

— Eric Haverkort, operations manager, Otto Netherlands

The group’s Dutch subsidiary Otto Netherlands was a traditional mail order catalog company specializing in women’s fashion and leisure. Twice a year it printed thousands of huge catalogs to deliver throughout the country for customers to send in their orders.

However, in line with the rest of the group, Otto Netherlands decided that e-commerce was the way forward and printed its last 50,000 catalogs in June 2014.

“We were the second largest catalog company in Holland and growth was the main business driver for our decision to go paperless and become a completely e-commerce retailer,” says Eric Haverkort, manager of operations at Otto Netherlands.

“When we stopped producing catalogs, we knew we would lose a part of our ‘paper’ turnover. We needed to compensate for this by attracting new customers and extra turnover through the internet channel.

“The biggest challenge we faced was that we required a significantly different approach to the market. Our whole IT systems, marketing systems and everything used to interact with customers had to be fully aligned and above all, be able to act and react much quicker on the market than we were used to. The IT investment we made now would have to service double or treble the amount of traffic in the next two to three years.”

The company’s e-commerce site runs on central systems at the Hamburg head office but business growth due to e-commerce meant that it needed to replace its ageing local systems that provide office automation for 300 Dutch staff. Wanting to focus all its efforts on the main business of selling, Otto Netherlands outsourced its complete IT department to local company IT Support Groep. They also took on the internal IT team who had specialist knowledge of Otto systems, including the head office mainframes.



“To support the company’s move to e-commerce, we were asked for our ideas about how to replace the whole Otto infrastructure including hardware, software and networking,” says Fred Hohenstein, senior network engineer and project manager at IT Support Groep. “We contacted HPE and got some information about its ConvergedSystem solution. There were lots of new words and new techniques to think about but we got great support about sizing and the whole system. We then had the eureka idea that it would be great for Otto.”

Solution

HPE ConvergedSystem

Otto had considered an external cloud solution but due to its complex connectivity to the headquarters’ mainframes in Hamburg, it was decided to install internal systems.

“Right from the beginning of the project, we were impressed by how well it was managed and by the knowledge and experience of the people within the HPE organization,” says Haverkort. “They flew in a complete team and that gave us a really great feeling.”

IT Support Groep chose HPE ConvergedSystem One, a starter configuration launched exclusively for the Dutch market and profiled to meet Otto’s specific needs. HPE subsequently brought the offering to market globally, and it is now known as HPE ConvergedSystem 700.

Offering integrated servers, storage and networking wrapped with services and support, the HPE ConvergedSystem 700 is flexible and scalable and is delivered as a pre-configured solution that is easy to implement and manage.

Otto’s ConvergedSystem features HPE StoreServ 3PAR Storage with 40 x 450GB disks, HPE BladeSystem c7000 enclosure with nine HPE ProLiant BL460c Gen8 blade servers and two HPE network switches. Storage is directly connected to the servers using the HPE Virtual Connect FlexFabric interconnect which eliminates the complexity of too many switches.

Backup is provided by an HPE StorageWorks D2600 30TB SAS disk enclosure and the servers are managed using HPE Insight Control software. The Otto infrastructure is covered by a Proactive Support contract.

Customer at a glance

Hardware

- HPE ConvergedSystem 700 with:
 - HPE 3PAR StoreServ 7200 Storage with 40 x 450Gb disks
 - HPE ProLiant BL460c Gen8 servers
 - HPE Virtual Connect FlexFabric
 - HPE Startup BladeSystem c7000 enclosure
 - HPE StorageWorks D2600 36TB 6G SAS LFF MDL
 - HPE 5120-16G SI switch
 - HPE 5920AF-24XG switch

Software

- HPE Insight Control

HPE services

- HPE implementation and support services

“The HPE 3PAR StoreServ Storage is amazing. It’s fast and reliable, easy to manage and the virtual infrastructure with HPE Virtual Connect FlexFabric is the most exciting thing to work with. IT staff have a single pane of glass that shows them how the system is running and functioning.”

— Fred Hohenstein, senior network engineer and project manager, IT Support Groep

Benefit

Flexible and scalable

“Implementing an HPE ConvergedSystem 700 solution has supported Otto’s Dutch staff in the successful transition from traditional mail order to e-commerce and it is now the fourth largest e-commerce retailer in the Netherlands.

“This HPE ConvergedSystem 700 was a great platform for the virtualization of the Otto infrastructure because we needed less equipment combined with more functionality,” says Hohenstein. “It was an all-in-one-box solution that solved all the problems. Previously, Otto had a traditional IT solution based on rack-mounted servers, separate storage and a lot of cabling.

With HPE ConvergedSystem we got rid of all the cabling. Also, instead of having dozens of switches we now have just two high-end HPE switches that deliver more functionality than we had before.

“Also, the HPE blades have amazing power and functionality. The management of the blades was an easy transition from traditional HPE servers. It involves the same tools and the same equipment so IT staff experienced in traditional servers can easily manage blades. For the future, this is the base system for all the company’s IT.”

Data is money for a business like Otto and the value of its HPE ConvergedSystem platform is that it can handle big data. It’s also easily scalable as Haverkort explains: “We already want to expand the server capacity to accommodate our IP platform and it’s easy because we just plug in the new capacity. It’s so easy to scale up and that is complete confirmation that we made the right choice.”

Learn more at
hpe.com/go/convergedsystem



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