



#### Objective

Required a reliable and scalable virtualised server and storage infrastructure to increase availability, speed restoration times and support growth

#### Approach

Approached several organisations for their understanding of the chosen technologies and ability to design, implement and manage the infrastructure project

#### IT Matters

- Offers reliable server, storage and networking solutions in a virtualised environment, delivering a robust disaster recovery capability and supporting all business operations
- Satisfies the shared storage needs through efficient replication, protecting valuable business data

#### Business Matters

- Lowers restoration times from 24 hours to 15 minutes, increasing systems availability substantially and minimising business disruption
- Offers energy-efficient servers, lowering power and cooling costs by 50 per cent and reducing TCO
- Provides a highly scalable SMB IT infrastructure, supporting growth in a highly competitive market
- Delivers a less complex and easily maintained infrastructure, increasing productivity and reducing operating costs

# Focus International Ltd. fashions IT infrastructure from latest technologies

HPE server, storage and networking solutions transform fashion house's operations



Focus International Ltd., part of JD Sports Fashion plc, deploys HPE server, storage and networking solutions with advanced virtualisation and replication technologies to create a highly reliable IT infrastructure with a robust disaster recovery capability. The HPE servers have reduced power and cooling costs by 50 per cent while the storage and replication solutions have lowered restoration times from 24 hours to 15 minutes.

## Challenge

### Availability, restoration and scalability concerns

Focus International Ltd. controls operations from server rooms in London and Huddersfield, West Yorkshire. Although the existing IT infrastructure was originally well specified, more recently, senior executives became increasingly concerned about the availability of key production systems, slow restoration times following service disruption and insufficient scalability to respond to growing market demands.

The complex, dated infrastructure was also expensive to support and maintain while power and cooling costs were too high and environmentally unsound for an organisation that values green credentials. Moreover, the 10MB Multiprotocol Label Switching (MPLS) telecommunications network linking the two sites only supported an extremely slow out-of-hours incremental backup process and did not support cost-efficient Voice over IP (VoIP) telephony.

“From a server perspective, we’d already decided to move to Hewlett Packard Enterprise expertise as we sought only the best of the best technologies. We regard the HPE ProLiant DL360 Gen 9 Server as one of the finest in the world. Most importantly, we knew the HPE equipment would integrate well with our chosen virtualisation and replication technologies across the Wide Area Network.”

– Steve Anderson, IT manager, Focus International Ltd.

“Our main objective was to provide a more stable and available infrastructure to accommodate the demands of a growing, dynamic business without significant additional effort or costs,” explains Steve Anderson, IT manager, Focus International Ltd. “Our existing heterogeneous infrastructure contained only physical servers, included some legacy devices, had no replication capability and simply didn’t support a modern disaster recovery solution.”

#### Seeking new technologies

Focus International Ltd. adopted a more structured IT strategy and decided to invest in new server, storage and networking solutions as well as advanced replication and virtualisation technologies. All solutions would function under the Microsoft® Windows® Server 2012 operating system.

The small and medium-sized business (SMB) also required migration services to transfer data from the current servers to the new server environment; planning and installation services to provide data backup and site-to-site replication; and configuration and installation services for an upgraded Storage Area Network (SAN). Furthermore, Focus International Ltd. sought an email upgrade from Microsoft Exchange 2003 to cloud-based Microsoft Office 365.

Before starting the main infrastructure project, the company invested in a new VoIP phone system, deployed two Hewlett Packard Enterprise 2820 switches to support the IP technology and increased the MPLS fibre channel capacity to 50 MB.

“From a server perspective, we’d already decided to move to HPE expertise as we sought only the best of the best technologies. We regard the HPE DL360 server as one of the finest in the world,” continues Anderson. “Most importantly, we knew the HPE equipment would integrate well with our chosen virtualisation and replication technologies across the Wide Area Network (WAN). In our opinion, Microsoft and Veeam offer the best and most compatible virtualisation and replication solutions.”

## Solution

#### Finding the perfect fit

Focus International Ltd. started to look for a suitable partner to deliver the chosen server, backup and virtualisation technologies and to design, implement and manage the infrastructure project. After due consideration, Focus International Ltd. selected Corporate Systems Group (CSG) Limited, a leading IT infrastructure solutions provider and HPE Preferred Partner.



98%

reduction in service disruption restoration times

“Several organisations familiar with HPE solutions approached us when they heard about our requirements,” says Anderson. “CSG instantly stood out from the crowd as its specialists immediately understood our technical and financial requirements.”

“CSG was a perfect fit to support and deliver the infrastructure solutions and services we needed. The business had a comprehensive knowledge of all three vendors’ technologies backed by a thorough and professional approach. We also appreciated the close cooperation between HPE, Microsoft and Veeam Software.”

**Robust disaster recovery capability**

The primary production site in St Albans and the secondary site in Huddersfield both host three reliable, compact and energy efficient HPE DL360 Gen9 servers (File SQL and Backup). Microsoft Hyper-V Server acts as the virtualisation platform, generating three mirrored guest machines at the sites.

The HPE infrastructure solution also contains a high-performance HPE MSA 2040 Storage array. The two-node storage system operates in an active-active configuration and employs Veeam backup and replication software to duplicate data across both sites. The next generation HPE MSA 2040 Storage array provides excellent value for the Focus International Ltd. virtualisation initiative, satisfies the company’s shared storage and data protection needs and reduces Total Cost of Ownership (TCO) while dramatically increasing performance.

Two new secure, scalable and easy-to-use HPE 2920 switches support the higher performance MPLS fibre link and SMB SAN between the two server rooms.

This powerful HPE server, storage and networking solution combined with the Microsoft and Veeam Software technologies creates a robust backup and disaster recovery capability. A separate Apple Macintosh hardware and software infrastructure at the Huddersfield site supports the in-house design teams.

**SMB solution**

The HPE infrastructure solution delivered to Focus International Ltd. by CSG typifies the HPE solution portfolio for SMBs. It helps the company to increase productivity, lower costs, minimise downtime and support growth within the dynamic, fast-moving footwear and apparel markets. The server, storage and networking solutions work together to support business operations efficiently.

“The extremely reliable HPE ProLiant servers run highly productivity applications at the highest compute, memory and I/O levels of performance while the HPE storage solution focuses on several key areas including virtualisation, file sharing, SQL Server and back-up and data protection,” adds Jason Clark, managing director, Corporate Systems Group. “We’re also helping our client to migrate from Microsoft Exchange 2003 to the cloud-based Microsoft Office 365 email solution.”

**Focus International Ltd.**

Focus International Ltd., part of JD Sports Fashion plc, designs, sources, markets and distributes own-brand, and licensed, footwear and apparel. Established in 1993, this market leading company operates from locations in Huddersfield, London and St Albans. Well-known high-street retailers, independent outlets and major UK mail-order and e-commerce businesses visit these premises to view seasonal collections in vibrantly branded showrooms. Popular clothing brands include Ellesse, Peter Werth and FLY53 while the Mocks and Voi Jeans Co brands serve the footwear market.

## Case study

Focus  
International Ltd.

## Industry

Multichannel retail

## Customer at a glance

### Application

Data centre operations  
Disaster recovery

### Hardware

- 6 x HPE ProLiant DL360 Gen9 servers
- 1 x HPE MSA 2040 Storage array
- 2 x HPE 2820 Switch series
- 2 x HPE 2920 Switch series

### Software

- Microsoft Hyper-V Server
- Veeam Software Backup & Replication
- Microsoft Office 365  
(Exchange via the Cloud)
- Microsoft Windows Server 2012 R2

After designing and installing the HPE server, storage and networking solutions with the associated virtualisation and replication technologies, CSG successfully transferred all important data from the old physical servers to the new virtualised server environment. The HPE partner also setup the backup and site-to-site replication process and provided the configuration and deployment services for the upgraded SAN. CSG provides all infrastructure support services including 24/7 support with a four-hour response time.

## Benefit

### Increased availability and faster restoration

Today, Focus International Ltd. possesses a highly reliable, high-availability HPE server, storage and networking infrastructure operating with industry-leading virtualisation and replication technologies. The new infrastructure is extremely scalable, supporting growth within the business' buoyant and dynamic markets.

"The availability of our infrastructure has increased substantially by introducing these new technologies and installing uninterruptable power supplies and backup power failure systems. Outages are now very rare, minimising disruption to the production environment," comments Anderson. "A major advantage of the virtualised environment is remote access to the servers."

If an emergency arises at head office due to an unforeseen event, Focus International Ltd. now has peace of mind. IT staff simply switch key production systems and all operations to the disaster recovery site in Huddersfield, minimising business disruption. "When service disruption has taken place, restoration times are typically 15 minutes rather than 24 hours with the original incremental backup process, a fall of 98 per cent," declares Anderson.

### Lower hardware footprint and costs

The company is also reaping the benefits of a reduced hardware footprint in the server rooms. Replacing the 11 outdated physical servers with compact HPE ProLiant 360 Gen9 servers within a virtualised environment has reduced the number of server cabinets from three to one, releasing valuable space.

The new, less complex virtualised HPE infrastructure is also much easier to maintain and less expensive to operate. IT personnel can readily move systems between hardware platforms when they want to retire or replace equipment or conduct scheduled maintenance.

"After deploying the new HPE ProLiant servers, we estimate our power and cooling costs have fallen by 50 per cent, making a major contribution to lower ownership costs and boosting our environmental credentials," reveals Anderson.

With the back-end IT infrastructure completed across the company's two main sites, Focus International Ltd. future plans include refreshing the front-end infrastructure. "We'll certainly be taking a very close look at HPE technology to satisfy our desktop, laptop and wireless requirements after such a positive experience during our infrastructure project," concludes Anderson.

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4AA6-4673EEW, May 2016